



# THE NEW 12 OZ







GREAT BEER GREAT RESPONSIBILITY @ 2009

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MAY 25, 2009



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### It takes 100 to know 1

Albert Pujols tops our star panel's ranking of the 50 best players in baseball. Hall of Famer Frank Robinson explains why: "You could put him at any position—first, third, outfield—and he could play it like an All-Star." Cover Photography By Jay Drowns / SN

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When it comes to making a coaching adjustment that can sway an NBA playoff series, everything is relative, right Phil Jackson? "Its mother is necessity, so to speak. You really have to do it out of need." -By Sean Deveney

**Father-son project** 

Blackhawks assistant G.M. Stan Bowman has the best of both worlds. He's helping to build a Stanley Cup contender while working with his dad: "You start to realize that there is more to life than the details. There is, kind of, a big picture." -By Craig Custance

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Catch interviews with some of sports' biggest names every weekday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. ET on The Tim Brando Show. Tune in on 185 affiliates, on Sirius Satellite Radio Channel 127 or online at radio.sportingnews.com.

### **SportingNev**

### TO OUR READERS

Don't rush to your mailbox in two weeks-because Sporting News Magazine won't be in it. As in the past, we're taking a short vacation. But don't worry. We'll be back on June 18, and we'll continue to hit your inbox every morning between now and then with Sporting News Today. If you haven't already, sign up for the world's first digital daily sports newspaper-it's completely free-at sportingnewstoday.com.

Head online for a daily dose of My Profile. In the coming weeks, look for insights from legends Johnny Bench, Raymond Berry, Ara Parseghian, Thurman Thomas, Chet "The Jet" Walker, Doug Williams and many more.

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### MONUMENTAL MOMENTS IN HISTORY

1921 Padio broadcasts of baseball games begin

1947 • The World Series is televised for the first time

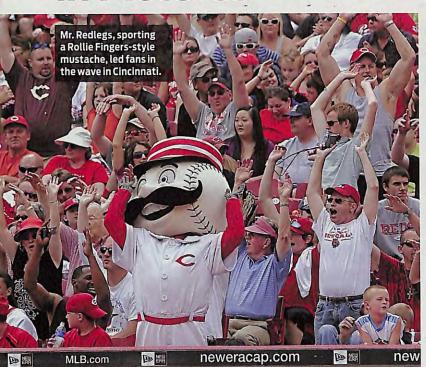
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# In Pictures

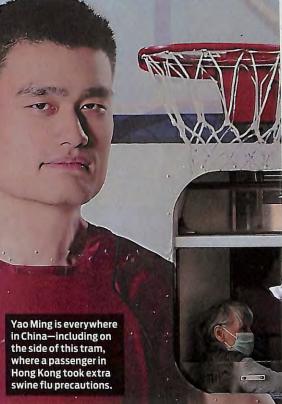












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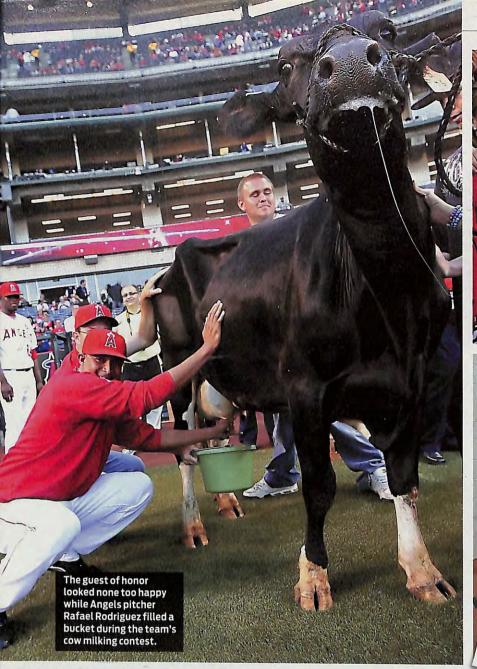
### In Memoriam

Thanks for the memories (from left) ...

- > Wayman Tisdale, who still holds Oklahoma's career scoring and rebounding records. "He was the nicest man in the world, with the biggest heart and an even bigger smile," *Sporting News* contributor Reggie Miller says of Tisdale, who lost his battle with cancer at age 44.
- Dom DiMaggio (left), who like brother Joe strung together one of baseball's longest hitting streaks—a Red Sox-record 34 in 1949. The seven-time All-Star died at 92.
- Danny Ozark, who guided the Phillies to three straight N.L. East titles from 1976-78. Sporting News' 1976 manager of the year, 85, lived his final years in Vero Beach, Fla., where he spent many springs as a Dodgers coach.
- > Chuck Daly, who struck gold with the 1992 Dream Team and led the Pistons to NBA titles in 1989 and '90. Daly, 78, died two months after he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.













# Since You Asked

You have guestions, we have answers

Russell has the talent to turn around the Raiders, but he must continue to grow into the role.



### **OUR QUESTION**

I can only take so much more of this. How long before my Raiders are back in the playoffs? Is JaMarcus Russell really the answer?

- Fred Reaves, Oakland

I'm curious what a current, accomplished NFL player thinks of rookies coming into the league and making more than they do without even taking a snap. Seems out of whack.

- Lee Davis, Pensacola, Fla.

yourturn@sportingnews.com, along with your name and hometown.

It's like Jeopardy! All letters to the editor must be phrased in the form of a question, even if it's "Why didn't you put an asterisk next to A-Rod's name at No. 2?" We'll choose our favorites and answer them in this space and regularly in Sporting News Today. E-mail your questions to

> Help me settle this debate: A hitter is struck on the hand while his hand is on the bat. He tries to avoid the pitch but doesn't attempt to swing. Is it a strike or does he get first

> > — Dale Wallace, San Diego

### YOUR OUESTION

What's the early line on the Heisman race? I can't remember a year when you had so many stars coming back-Tim Tebow, Sam Bradford, Colt McCoy. Who does one of my Heisman favorites, Desmond Howard, think has the edge going in? - Terry Franklin.

Baton Rouge, La.

### THEIR ANSWER

Tom Flores

2-time champion Raiders coach

Fred,

There are some serious but positive ifs to the answer. First off, the Raiders are a very young team and if you noticed last season, all the big plays were made by the kids. If they can grow up rapidly, they could be a playoff team in two years. JaMarcus is the answer if he matures with the rest of his teammates. He has all the qualities and seems to be headed in the right direction.

### THEIR ANSWER

**Bradie James** 

Cowboys linebacker

It can be a tough thing for some vets. And for some vets, it's all good if the rookies can help the team win games. Many vets play over 20 games in one season when you include preseason. So to see rookies come in who haven't endured one training camp is a tough pill to swallow.

### THEIR ANSWER

Richie Garcia

4-time World Series umpire

Dale.

When a pitched ball hits the batter's hand while holding the bat and he's not attempting to swing at the pitch, it's a dead ball and the batter will be awarded first base. If, in the umpire's judgment, he's made an attempt to swing at the pitch, the umpire will call the pitch a strike and the ball will be dead.

### THEIR ANSWER

**Desmond Howard** 1991 Heisman winner

Terry,

I think Tim Tebow has the edge to win the Heisman going into the season. Last January, Tim went head-tohead with 2008 winner Sam Bradford and led his team to an impressive victory in the most meaningful game of the season-the BCS national championship. I think voters look at how both QBs performed in that game and give Tebow the edge right now.

My Profile (What you won't find on Facebook ... even if you are approved as a friend)

### Ian Kinsler

Rangers second baseman

- Born: June 22, 1982, in Tucson, Ariz.
- > Status: Married
- Alma mater: Missouri
- ➤ What's on TV: Entourage, The Sopranos, SportsCenter
- > What's in my iPod: Lil Wayne, Jay-Z, Kanye West, Dierks Bentley, Lynyrd Skynyrd
- What I drive: 2008 BMW M5, black on black with black rims
- Favorite flicks: The Boondock Saints, Old School, Wedding Crashers, Pineapple Express, Step Brothers
- Bookmarks: SportingNews.com for fantasy football, MLB.com, Google
- > Love to trade places for a day with ... Justin Timberlake because he is the greatest entertainer of our
- First job: Grocery store bagger at Fry's Food and

Drugs while in high school in Tucson. Bagged groceries, restocked shelves, got the carts out of the parking lot. I quit after two weeks and never worked another day, besides baseball.

- Talent I'd most like to have: X-ray vision
- > For dinner: Beef fajitas from Uncle Julio's
- > Favorite city to visit: Chi-Town
- > Favorite team as a kid: Arizona Cardinals
- Dream date: Megan Fox
- My greatest love: My wife, Tess, and new daughter, Rian Brooklynn
- My bucket list: 1. Play a round of golf with a score below 75, 2. Beat my dad at basketball
- My motto: "Live like it's your last day. ... Dream like you are going to live forever." - James Dean

- Jeff D'Alessio



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It you answered correctly, you are an MPGenius. Go to gumout.com for more information on how to maximize your fuel economy.

Correct Answer: a. Gumout Regane.

# SN NBA AWARDS

# **PLAYER OF THE YEAR** LEBRO

SF, CAVALIERS

By Sean Deveney

sdeveney@sportingnews.com

Maybe it started in the 2007 Finals. Maybe it started in last year's epic seven-game playoff series against the Celtics. Maybe it was the thrill of the summer's Olympic experience. Maybe it was some

PPG: 28.4 7.6 RPG:

7.2

APG:

combination. But, at some point over the past year, Cavaliers

small forward LeBron James catapulted himself from among the elite of today's NBA players into the mix of all-time greats. That's what a 66-win regular season and unrelenting statistical production will get you. "He's incredible," says Hall of Famer George Gervin. "The combination of speed and power and athleticism is something you just don't see."

James' peers, obviously, have noticed. In a poll of 231 players, he easily won Sporting News' player of the year award, piling up 142 votes to 44 for Heat shooting guard Dwyane Wade. Lakers shooting guard Kobe Bryant, last season's SN player of the year, was third, with 32 votes.

SN asked those around James to describe areas of improvement that have given him his second SN player of the year award-he shared the 2005-06 honor with Steve Nash-at age 24.

### **FOCUS**

Cavaliers power forward Joe Smith, who has played with James in parts of the past two seasons: "What I have noticed, the last few years of playoff experience have helped him. Going through the playoffs is very beneficial, especially for a young player, because it gives you focus-it gives you an idea of what you're working for. That's one thing about LeBron-he is going to work as hard or harder than anyone. His approach to the game, his attitude, how hungry he is, it is really evident. He has developed a will, so that no matter what is going on, he is looking at it one way, and that is, 'We are not going to lose this game. We're not going to lose.' It is almost impossible for the rest of us not to feed off of that."

### **INTELLIGENCE**

Cavaliers center Zydrunas Ilgauskas, who has played with James since his rookie season: "He is able to read defenses and see things before they

happen. He knows what teams are going to do, and he has gotten really good at figuring that out and knowing how to react. So, sometimes, for the defense, there is nothing they can do. When he first came into the league, when he was a rookie, he was already so talented. But every year since then, he has added something. He has gotten better at shooting, at ballhandling, at defense, and now, you can see, he is smarter."

### SPIRIT

Cavaliers point guard Mo Williams, who was traded to the team last summer: "This is the closest team I have been on. When we go on the road, or when we have down time, we will all go and do something together, as a team. Everybody goes. I got here, and I saw how it was, and I knew this was a different kind of team. I think that has been a big part of our success; it is something that keeps us all on the same page. There are no agendas here. That starts with LeBron. He's got a great personality; he is like a big kid."

### **LEADERSHIP**

who played with James on the of (Cleveland's) players and just shows such great drive on and off the floor. (In Beijing), I think he found out that he could lead by example. He did a great job of leading us in the Olympics. He played hard, worked out hard, and everybody followed his lead. He's a natural leader."

Magic center Dwight Howard, 2008 U.S. Olympic team: "He's been a great inspiration for a lot

- Contributing: Albert Breer

# **COACH** OF THE YEAR

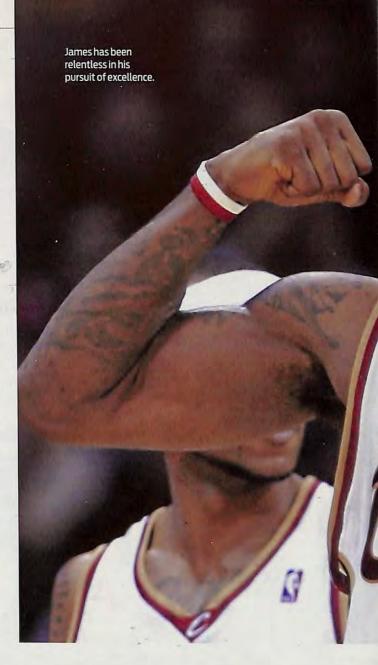
CAVALIERS

LeBron James' success in Cleveland was contagious. Not only was he named player of the year, but Mike Brown, 39, grabbed nearly half of the votes for coach of the year. And general manager Danny Ferry, 42, easily won SN's executive of the year award. SN asked Brown about working with Ferry and veteran power forward Ben Wallace about playing for Brown.

### > Ben Wallace on Brown:

"He treats you like

an adult. I think that is the first thing, and you'd be surprised, because you don't always get that with coaches. But he is very fair. He does not pretend to have all the answers. I think players appreciate that he is honest, he holds you accountable, but he always has your back. He will come to players and actually ask them what they think, get their input. I think that gives him a certain amount of respect with players."



### All-NBA team

Dwight Howard, C, Magic. He averaged almost a full block more than in '07-08 and—oh, yeah—led the league at 13.8 rebounds per game.

▶ LeBron James, SF, Cavaliers. The individual stats have always been there. The 66 wins-up from 45 in '07-08-are something new.

> Kobe Bryant, SG, Lakers. His 46.7 percent shooting was his best since 2001-02. Not bad for a 30-year-old.

Dwyane Wade, SG, Heat. He led the league in scoring (30.2 ppg) and was the only player to average more than two steals and more than one block.

> Chris Paul, PG, Hornets. He almost won the MVP award last year, then put up career-high averages in points (22.8), rebounds (5.6) and steals (2.8).

16.8

3.9

6.3

RPG:

APG:

Derrick

Rose



# ERRICK

**ROOKIE** OF THE YEAR

PG, BULLS

No, the Cavaliers did not win every award. For rookie of the year, players went with the No. 1 overall pick from

last year's draft, Chicago's Derrick Rose, by a wide margin. Rose received 166 votes, while Memphis' O.J. Mayo had 24. Rose, 20, led the Bulls to the playoffs and eight more wins (41) than they had the season before (33). He seemed to impress just about everyone around the league:

Celtics coach DOC RIVERS: "The ceiling is so high on Derrick. He is one of my favorite young players to watch. He is very composed; he never cracks under any kind

of pressure. And, when you think about it, he is so young and was put under pressure right away. The Bulls gave him the ball on Day 1 and told him to run with it. I like him because he is a humble kid, he is going to work hard, and he is only going to get better and better."

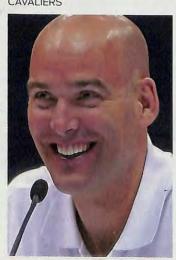
Hornets point guard CHRIS PAUL: "I have heard people compare him to me, and honestly, I am flattered. His speed is just incredible. I wish I was that fast. But he's got the whole package. Heknows how to score, he knows how to get his teammates involved, he knows how to run a game. He is going to be a good one. I mean, he already is a good one, and he is

NBA commissioner DAVID STERN: "He is so quietly a great player that it's just a delight to watch him and to listen to him and to see him grow throughout the year, to see the way he took the leadership mantle in the playoffs. The great thing is, Chicago can focus on him as Derrick, not as the next you-know-who. to let him grow and be himself without the hothouse pressure and the shadow of Michael Jordan."

going to get better."

- Sean Devener

# **EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR**



"Danny has been terrific. He helps me out so many ways, in ways a lot of people don't even know, ways my assistants don't even know. We spend a lot of time on the phone. We spend a lot of time together after games, when everybody is gone and it is just he and I talking in my office, or even after that. He challenges me. He throws ideas my way, ones that make sense, ones that make me think. That allows me to be a better coach-and a better person, really. That I value more than the moves he has made to build this team. That stuff, the behind-the-scenes stuff, that's the stuff only I know and only I will ever know. "In terms of putting the team together, he has done a terrific job, with (assistant general

> Brown on Ferry:

managers) Chris Grant and Lance Blanks. He identified the pieces we need to make this puzzle whole. When you have a guy with a vision and a plan, like Danny, it makes you more likely to get results, rather than someone who flounders from idea to idea. He came in believing in something, and he has stuck with it and seen it through."

- Sean Deveney

### THE BALLOT BOX

Sporting News received votes from 231 NBA players and 41 coaches and executives for our awards. The players picked the player of the year and rookie of the year. Coaches and executives voted for the coach and executive awards, plus selected the All-NBA team.

### 2009 SN NHL AWARDS

### **PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

# **ALEX OVECHKIN**

F, CAPITALS

### **By Craig Custance**

ccustance@sportingnews.com

It was an accident. Even the most competitive goalie in the world wouldn't purposely trip superstar Alex Ovechkin in a skills competition during All-Star weekend.

It was an exhibition. It was about having

Goals: 56
Points: 110
+/-: Plus-8

fun. Yet, there was Ovechkin flying onto the Montreal ice and crashing into the end boards.

You can only imagine what was going through the mind of Bruins goalie Tim Thomas. Ovechkin got up, skated toward an apologetic Thomas and said something that still makes the goalie laugh.

"He said, 'A Russian machine never break,' " Thomas says. "Just like that."

This particular Russian machine only gets

For the second straight season, NHL players voted for Ovechkin, 23, as *Sporting News'* player of the year. He picked up 147 first-place votes, more than double Penguins center Evgeni Malkin's 65.

As scary as it is for a goalie to think he might have injured the league's biggest superstar during a skills competition, it's even scarier trying to stop his shot. Ovechkin led the league with 56 goals and joined Wayne Gretzky and Mike Bossy as the only players with three 50-goal seasons in their first four years.

Ovechkin also finished the regular season with 528 shots—156 more than any other player. Nobody is more lethal the moment he enters the offensive zone.

"When he's got the puck, you have to make sure you're ready because he's going to fire away and he's going to fire away quick," Vancouver goalie Roberto Luongo says. "He's dangerous with his shot from anywhere in the zone. There are not a lot of guys who can score from anywhere."

Pittsburgh goalie Marc-Andre Fleury, who battled Ovechkin in an entertaining second-round playoff series, says he has learned to be ready for Ovechkin quicker than for any other player. Against Ovechkin, Fleury gets to the top of the crease faster. He tries to square him up. He tries to get big.

"I eat a lot of McDonald' s," he jokes. "He's

always a guy you have to watch."

And this was the season everybody seemed to watch Ovechkin a little more.

Maybe it was his (some think excessive) celebration of his 50th goal. Maybe it was his feud with hockey analyst Don Cherry. Maybe it was the way his rivalry with Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby became increasingly public.

Ovechkin's stardom made the leap to the sports mainstream, a bigger leap even than the ones he takes into the glass after he scores a goal.

"Who wouldn't want that attention?" says Washington coach Bruce Boudreau. "Maybe Sidney doesn't want that attention, but Alex loves it. It doesn't make him a bad person; it makes him excitable."

Teammate Sergei Fedorov sees room for improvement, especially if Ovechkin learns to trust his teammates a little more. But one thing Fedorov doesn't want Ovechkin to change is that passion. The celebrations, the physical play, the trash talk ... they're all part of what makes Ovechkin the best player in the world—the indestructible Russian machine.

"It's honestly coming from the heart," Fedorov says. "It's just the way he thinks and just the way he cherishes the game."

### **ALL-NHL TEAM**

➤ F Alex Ovechkin, Capitals. Topped 50 goals for the third time in the past four seasons.

➤ F Evgeni Malkin, Penguins. Led the NHL with 113 points, the highest total of his skyrocketing career.

➤ FZach Parise, Devils. Gets better every year; 45 goals put him among the league's elite scorers.

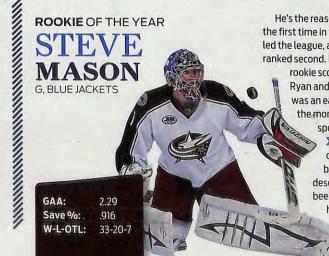
➤ D Zdeno Chara, Bruins. Led Boston's resurgence with a physical presence and the league's hardest shot.

➤ D Mike Green, Capitals. The seventh defenseman in league history to score 30 goals.

**➤ G Tim Thomas, Bruins**. Led the league in save percentage (.933) and goals-against average (2.10).

### THE BALLOT BOX

It always means a little more when an award comes from your peers. So we asked 331 NHL players, coaches and executives to vote on *Sporting News'* annual awards. The players picked the player of the year, goalie of the year and rookie of the year. Executives and coaches selected the coach of the year and executive of the year. The combined group of 331 picked the All-Starteam.



He's the reason Columbus made the playoffs for the first time in franchise history. His 10 shutouts led the league, and his 2.29 goals-against average ranked second. In a season that featured impressive

rookie scorers such as Anaheim's Bobby Ryan and Chicago's Kris Versteeg, Mason, 20, was an easy winner. His teammates picked the moments that made them realize he's special:

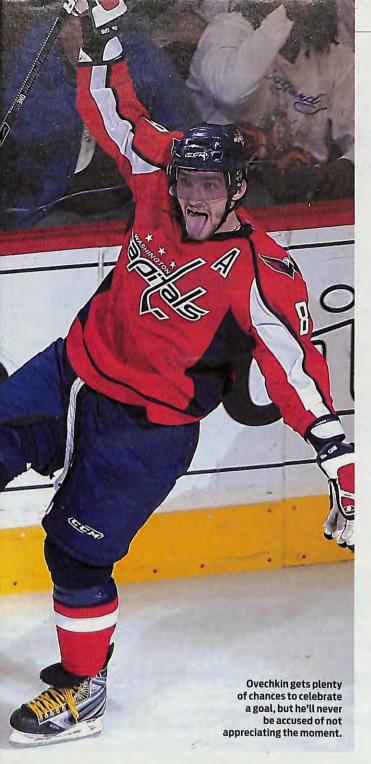
➤ Rick Nash: "I think you find three of those moments every game. He's been unbelievable. He definitely deserves the rookie of the year. He's been our most valuable player. It's honestly the truth: Every single game we've won he's made two or

three spectacular saves."

➤ Derek Dorsett: "That save (against Vancouver), we were up one goal. They had all the pressure in the world on us, down in our zone. He made a big save, then kind of fell over. The puck went to the other side of the crease. It was a wide-open cage and he spun his body all the way around and threw his glove there and stopped it. It was an amazing save."

➤ Fredrik Modin: There's so many. What comes to mind for me is not one particular save. I don't know how many times I've seen him make a huge save and the rebound comes out and there's an open net and he's there, just glovin' the next one. He's a big body, he's quick and you seldom see him out of position."

- Craig Custance



### **EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR** PETER CHIARELLI



He took a chance on a coach who had been fired twice. He was ripped for signing Michael Ryder after a horrible season with the Canadiens. He signed a 35-year-old goalie to a four-year contract extension. Clearly, general manager Peter Chiarelli isn't afraid to take risks. Now that he's reaping the rewards, Chiarelli, 44, shared with Sporting News the three moves he believes made the biggest impact on Boston's rise to the No. 1 seed in the Eastern Conference:

- 1. Signing Ryder to a three-year deal. "I know it was a criticized move at the time. We put a lot of thought into it from the perspective that it was a guy who I had seen for many years in the Northeast Division. He was a guy who had a long relationship with our coach, and he was the type of player we were looking for."
- 2. Adding Blake Wheeler. "It was down to us, New York, Montreal and Vancouver, and we were a good fit because we needed size on the wings. Everybody knew about Blake, and we wanted to put him on the wing, and he wanted to play wing. I think that was helpful. It allowed us to have three deep lines, which was important for us to have success this year."
- 3. Signing Stephane Yelle. "He helped stabilize the fourth line, penalty kill, faceoffs and to bring in leadership. He's one of our most important faceoff guys. He's won a Cup—a couple of Cups. When you're adjusting these young guys into the lineup, you have to have the right type of experience to surround them. (Yelle) is an underrated guy." - Craig Custance

**COACH** OF THE YEAR

BRUINS



Claude Julien was general manager Peter Chiarelli's second head coaching hire in Boston, If Chiarelli had whiffed, he probably wouldn't have gotten a chance to hire a third. "The owner said, 'Are you sure about this guy?" Chiarelli says. He was. He had to be. Julien, 49, rewarded that faith by molding the Bruins into an Eastern Conference power in his second season. The blueprint for success was simple:

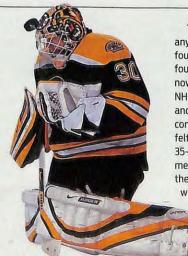
- > He allowed veterans to lead. "It's been huge," Julien says. "That's one of the things that's really helped our hockey club. As a coach, I want to make them accountable, but they make themselves accountable to each other. When one is not pulling his load, the other lets him know it."
- > He trusted Tim Thomas. "He leaves me well enough alone, which is always a good working relationship," says Thomas, SN's goalie of the year. "When things are going well, he doesn't mess them up. He knows how to step back and let it go. But if he sees something he wants me to do better, he also lets it be known."
- > He tweaked his defensive system. "I sat down with him this summer and said we have to be more offensive, but you can't take away from your bread and butter-your defensive zone coverage," Chiarelli says. "He activated that defenseman just a little bit more. ... That resulted in better neutral zone rushes, and we think more goals."

- Craig Custance

### **GOALIE** OF THE YEAR **THOMAS** BRUINS

GAA: W-L-OTL:

2.10 .933 36-11-7



Tim Thomas doesn't have anything left to prove. He fought to get in the league. He fought for a starting job. And now he's the best goalie in the NHL-confirmed by his peers and by the four-year, \$20 million contract extension the Bruins felt comfortable giving to a 35-year-old last month. The deal meant security, validity and the freedom to focus solely on winning a Stanley Cup. Some thoughts about the

contract-and the man who signed it:

> Thomas: "Obviously, I was very happy. I also was glad to be signing that contract with Boston-after all the time I put in the system, getting the opportunities here, being able to run with the opportunities and to get rewarded. It was an acknowledgement from them. It was a good thing."

Peter Chiarelli, G.M...

Bruins: "The negotiations were a lot longer than anyone knew. There were things we took into consideration-the succession plan, like I call it, in goaltending. There was Tim's age, which was a factor on the cap. By the same token ... he's a Vezina Trophy contender."

David Steckel, F, Capitals:

"He's a fierce competitor. His human nature translates on the ice. The prime example of that was the tap he took from (Sean) Avery. He's not going to take anything from anyone. That's the way he's going to play during the year. He makes saves, he challenges players, and that's what makes him so great."

- Craig Custance

# Survey Says ...

- Tony Romo—Future star or subpar?
- Missing piece—Chemistry or a coach?

After the spring cleaning in Dallas—see ya, T.O.—Sporting News surveyed 19 ex-Cowboys for answers to those questions and others

### SN's panel

Eric Bjornson TE. 1995-99

**Larry Cole** DL, 1968-80

**Tony Dorsett** RB, 1977-87

Michael Downs S, 1981-88

John Dutton DL, 1979-87

Lee Folkins TE/DE, 1962-64

Walt Garrison RB, 1966-74

Dale Hellestrae OL, 1990-2000

John Jett P, 1993-96

**Daryl Johnston** FB, 1989-99

Lee Roy Jordan LB, 1963-76

Crawford Ker G, 1985-90

**Brock Marion** S. 1993-97

Ralph Neely OL, 1965-77

**Tom Rafferty** OL, 1976-89

Otto Stowe WR, 1973

Ron Widby P. 1968-71

**Dave Widell** OL, 1988-89

Darren Woodson S, 1992-2003

Tony Romo

### Do you think Tony Romo is the answer at quarterback?

➤ Yes	14
➤ We'll see	3
≫No	2

### THEY SAID IT

"I think he can be the man. Tony was made a star before he did anything to justify it. You have to earn your stripes in this league. People expected too much from him. Let's keep it real, people." - Tony Dorsett

"Yes-if you put limitations on the amount of times he has to throw the ball. More short passes and run the ball more often."

### - Darren Woodson

"I would like to see him be more serious at times, but one of the things I admire most about Tony is how much fun he has playing the game." - Daryl Johnston

"I would draft and develop (a guarterback). Like Bill Parcells says, 'too comfortable.'"

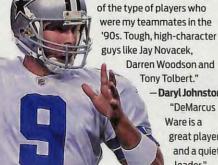
- Crawford Ker

### What current Cowboy would you most want as your teammate?

➤ DeMarcus Ware	6
➤ Jason Witten	51/2
> Marion Barber	4

Also receiving votes: Keith Brooking, Terence Newman, none. THEY SAID IT

"Jason Witten reminds me

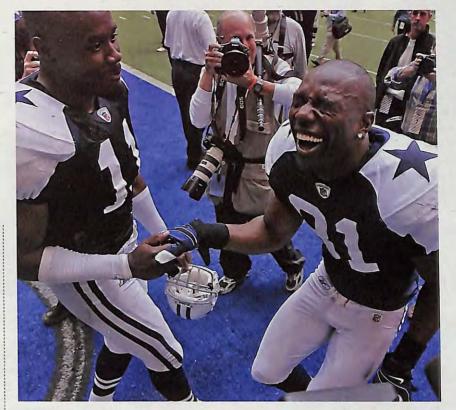


- Daryl Johnston "DeMarcus Ware is a great player and a quiet

> leader.' Darren Woodson

"Marion Barber-tough and a team player." - Ron Widby "None of 'em."

- John Dutton



### Do you think Jerry Jones is making the right moves to bring a title back to Dallas soon?

➤ Yes	7
<b>&gt;</b> No	 7
≫ Jury's out	5

### THEY SAID IT

"He needs to hire a football guy as G.M., (someone) who has some authority and can disagree with Jerry on decisions without the fear of being fired." - Dale Hellestrae

"I would have loved to have played for an owner like him. However, I think he stretches himself too thin at times because he wears too many hats." - Tony Dorsett

"I think the changes this offseason have been the right moves. Dallas was a mentally tired team down the stretch. A soap opera atmosphere can do that to a team. Trust me. Been there, done that." - Daryl Johnston

"He has tried to buy a title. Now, step back and be an owner." - Ron Widby

### Ever catch yourself checking out the cheerleaders during a game?

➤ Yes	13
<b>≫</b> No	4
>> Who, me?	1
➤ Never	1

### THEY SAID IT

"I am a man." - Darren Woodson

"You bet." - Lee Roy Jordan

"Always." - Larry Cole

"Cheerleaders? What cheerleaders? I thought those girls in short shorts, short blue blouses and go-go boots were auditioning for an Austin Powers movie sequel."

- Dave Widell

The consensus among former Cowboys is that there's no T.O. in team.

### Are the Cowboys better or worse without Terrell Owens?

<b>≫</b> Better	17
<b>&gt;</b> Worse	1
> Too soon to tell	1

### THEY SAID IT

"No teammate is better than the team or the league." - Brock Marion

"The time has come. It's time to move on."

### - Otto Stowe

"I don't see any other Hall of Famers on the depth chart." - Dave Widell

### What's the one thing the Cowboys need to become contenders again?

A new coach	4
➤ Leadership	3
➤ Discipline	21/2
➤ Attitude adjustments	2

Also receiving votes: Desire, heart, mental toughness, offensive line, playmaker, teamwork, wins in December, work ethic.

### THEY SAID IT

"A foot up their butts." - Tony Dorsett

"A heart." - Tom Rafferty

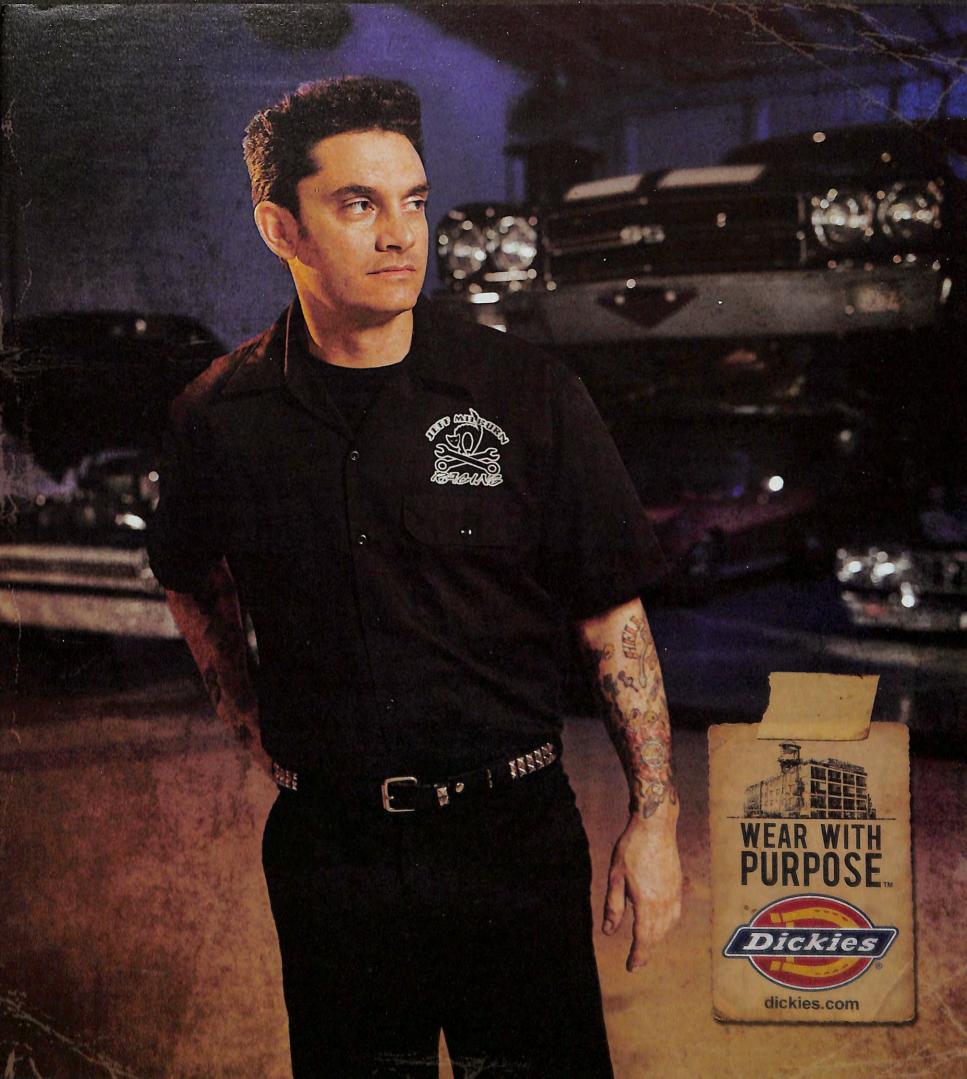
"Lose the attitude and just play football. We won because we played football. And then our attitude came." - Brock Marion

"A playmaking receiver without baggage."

- Eric Bjornson

"It seems like the players are running the team." - Walt Garrison

- Jeff D'Alessio



## Next Gen: MLB DRAFT PREVIEW

# 'I'm looking for a CHALLEN

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR, KID. AS THE PRESUMED NO. 1 PICK—OF THE NATIONALS—IT WON'T BE LONG UNTIL SAN DIEGO STATE FIREBALLER STEPHEN STRASBURG IS THE NO. 1 HOPE FOR A MORIBUND FRANCHISE.

By Steve Greenberg

sgreenberg@sportingnews.com

t unfolded like the end of a majestic tale.
Stephen Strasburg—once a lumpy high school pitcher with little work ethic and next to no prospects—was standing in front of the San Diego State dugout, leading his team in the Aztecs fight song. Moments before, the 6-5, 220-pound righthander had completed the first no-hitter of his career in his final home start, a 17-strikeout, 1-walk thrill ride against Air Force that left no one in the overflow crowd with any doubts: The strapping, 100-mph-throwing Strasburg is a runaway train bound for the top of the baseball mountain.

Along the way, the 20-year-old will shake a few hands after the Nationals make him the No. 1 pick in the draft, which is nothing more than a formality. And maybe—big maybe—he'll whistle to a stop and sign a contract, potentially a record-breaker. Considering the talent that has made him one of the highest-rated prospects ever and the agent, Scott Boras, who will do his bidding, those negotiations could mean a lengthy delay for the Strasburg Express.

But let's worry about that when the time comes.

"He needs a new challenge," says his catcher, Erik Castro, "because right now he's a man playing against boys."

That's more like it.

It's why Strasburg—12-O with a 1.34 ERA and a nation-leading 16.6 strikeouts per nine innings this season—was the lone collegian on the U.S. Olympic team in Beijing. It's why pro scouts, major league general managers, thousands of new fans and

many in the national media flocked to San Diego to behold a budding sensation who overmatched hitters with a triple-digit fastball, blurred their vision with a 95-mph two-seamer, bent their will with a low-80s curveball and, time after time, struck them out with the cruelest of sliders.

It's why Tony Gwynn, a Hall of Famer and the Aztecs' head coach, became the second-most famous man in the ballpark named for him.

"You keep building him up," Gwynn warns, "and there are people who want to see him fall on his face"

But not even Gwynn can sound this cautionary note in earnest: "It doesn't faze him," he says.

Look, only a fool would be gooey-eyed enough to suggest Strasburg can't possibly go bust, right? The list of aces-in-waiting who never lived up to the hype is so long there's no use mentioning names. And with all due respect to the Mountain West Conference, it's not exactly the N.L. East.

As Strasburg points out, "I've been trying to expect tough situations so I can buckle down, but there haven't been many. I'm looking for a challenge ... to have to make a tough pitch to get out of an inning, because that's part of baseball."

He may learn that the hard way as soon as this season. "In Washington," Gwynn says, "I know they want to put some people in the seats."

Better Strasburg should be allowed to wait awhile. "I think you have to learn how to pitch at the next level," Gwynn says, "and I hope he gets the opportunity to learn."

### **RAVE REVIEWS**

Just how good is Stephen Strasburg? Three MLB know-it-alls weigh in:

- "He's as good as a college pitcher as I've seen and as good a prospect as I've run across. There are guys off the top of my head that come to mind when you talk about really goodlooking prospects, and he's certainly in that team photo."

- Nationals vice president of baseball operations Mike Rizzo, whose team will likely take Strasburg No. 1

"No doubt, Stephen Strasburg is the best amateur player I've ever scouted. He has four solid average-or-better pitches and has physical and mental acumens to compete and win at the major league level today." — George Kachigian, White Sox scout

"Mark Prior was the best (prospect I ever saw), but Strasburg would be the best now. He throws 5 mph harder than Prior with similar accuracy, and has real good command—probably not quite as good as Prior. With that said, Strasburg's stuff is dominating."—David Finley, Red Sox scout

- Ken Bradley

### The Strasburg file



- ➤ My best quality is ... My work ethic.
- ▶ I'm focusing on improving ... My changeup.
- ▶ Best moment on the international stage: Pitching the Olympic semifinal against Cuba.
- ➤ What I'll miss most about college: My teammates.
- ➤ And least: Study hall.
- ▶ I'm eager to pitch against ... Albert Pujols, because he's one of the best fastball hitters around.
- > I'll remind you of ... Maybe Mark Prior, not sure.

- Ryan Fagan

Strasburg's combination of command and velocity has rarely—if ever—been seen at the amateur level.

# IGE?

# **BECKETT, PRIOR, PRICE...**Strasburg is 'better than all of them'



TCU coach **Jim Schlossnagle** has seen plenty of Stephen Strasburg this season. In two starts spanning 15 innings, Strasburg has struck out 28 Horned Frogs. Schlossnagle's team, a seasonlong resident in the top 25, lost both those games and

got just seven total hits off Strasburg. Schlossnagle doesn't hold back when giving SN three reasons Strasburg is handsdown the best pitcher on the draft board:

1. He's better than a young Josh Beckett. "I've been coaching 19 years in college baseball and pretty much every amateur pitcher that has come across the scene in the last 10 to 12 years I've either seen, recruited or coached against. The best guys, I've seen. You know, Josh Beckett, Mark Prior, David Price—all three of those guys were amazing—and Stephen Strasburg is better than all of them, at least at this stage."

2. He has not one but two great pitches. "He pitches down in the zone with movement to both sides of the plate and—this is the toughest thing—his slider is every bit as good as his fastball. With an aluminum bat in your hand, if he were just a one-pitch guy with the fastball or the breaking ball wasn't in the strike zone very much, you could cheat a little bit and get to a fastball. We've tried to just tell our hitters to go up there and pick out one of the two pitches, sit on it and try to hit. At least college hitters, if you go up there and try to hit both, it's really going to be a long day."

3. You can't even try to run on him. "He has great command, doesn't walk anybody—but when somebody gets on base, he's a really good athlete and can field his position. He's about a 1.1-second release time to home plate. Anything under 1.3 is normally good. So you can't run on him. He's as complete a package as I've ever seen."

- As told to Ken Bradley





### **BEFORE THEY WERE STARS**

The best amateur player Eddie Bane ever laid eyes on? Alex Rodriguez, hands down.

And the best pitcher? The immortal Kiki Jones, who never made it higher than Class A ball after the Dodgers drafted him No. 15 overall in 1989.

"Shows you how hard it is to be a baseball scout as opposed to our comrades in the NBA and NFL," says Bane, the Angels' scouting director and himself a former first-round draft pick.

With the Nationals on the clock, Sporting News asked 40 major league scouts to vote for the greatest prospect they ever laid eyes on. A-Rod got the most checkmarks at the ballot box.

### ALEX RODRIGUEZ, V V V V V V V V

- > SS, Westminster Christian (Miami)
- > No. 1 pick, 1993, Mariners

**Reds scout Tony Arias says:** "A-Rod could do so many things on the baseball field at a high level and at a young age. He was a three-sport athlete who could have excelled at the Division I college level in football and basketball if he had chosen those sports."

### JOE MAUER, V V V V

- > C, Cretin-Derham Hall (St. Paul, Minn.)
- > No. 1 pick, 2001, Twins

Diamondbacks scout Tom Allison says:

"Everything he did was so good, and he did it without effort. He was so athletic and balanced in all of his actions. He carried himself with a confident swagger."

### JOSH BECKETT, V///

- > SP, Spring (Texas)
- No. 2 pick, 1999, Marlins

**Pirates scout Rene Gayo says:** "I saw him at 15. He was touched by God with his curveball and arm action and, more importantly, was a frontline competitor."

### JOSH HAMILTON, VVVV

- > OF, Athens Drive (Raleigh, N.C.)
- > No. 1 pick, 1999, Rays

Royals scout Steve Williams says: "He had power, speed and plus hitting ability, and he played the game with ease. Josh was a very advanced high school player that could have also been a pitcher. The things he is doing now are what I thought he would do."

### MANNY RAMIREZ, / / / /

- > OF, George Washington (New York)
- > No. 13 pick, 1991, Indians

**Giants scout John Barr says:** "I wrote that Manny had the best bat speed I saw since (Gary) Sheffield. I saw Manny hit a ball at the Parade Grounds (in Brooklyn, N.Y.) that cleared the left fielder's head and then almost hit the second baseman who was playing on a different field."

Also receiving votes: J.D. Drew, Darin Erstad, Cole Hamels, Todd Helton, Bo Jackson, Tim Lincecum, Jake Locker, Rafael Palmeiro, David Price, Mark Prior, Stephen Strasburg, Frank Thomas, Justin Upton.

Jeff D'Alessio

# College prospects to watch

### 1. STEPHEN STRASBURG, RHP,

- San Diego State
- ➤ What's to like? Take it from TCU coach Jim Schlossnagle: "Stephen is the greatest combination of power arm and pitchability and command that I've ever seen." And he's done it on the big stage, pitching for Team USA in the Beijing Olympics.
- ➤ **Needs work:** He can work on polishing his secondary pitches, but that's being picky.
- > Reminds us of: Josh Beckett

### 2. DUSTIN ACKLEY, CF/1B, North Carolina

> What's to like? "The best

- play multiple positions with great athleticism," says UNC associate head coach Scott Forbes. Ackley hit above .400 each of his first two seasons and is near that mark again as a junior.
- Needs work: Ackley will play in the outfield as a pro and needs to log innings in the minors to adapt to playing there full time.
  - > Reminds us of: Chase Utley

- 3. GRANT GREEN, SS, USC
- ➤ What's to like? He is a five-tool player with a lot of upside. He hits for average, runs the bases and fields his position well.
- ➤ Needs work: Green has shown flashes of power but not consistency. He hits for average, but his strikeout numbers are on the high end.
- > Reminds us of: Derek Jeter
- 4. KYLE GIBSON, RHP, Missouri
- ➤ What's to like? Tigers pitching coach Tony Vitello says Gibson has a "rare mix of height and athleticism, rare combo of plus stuff and command and a rare mix of talent and incredible intangibles."
- ➤ Needs work: At 6-6, 208, Gibson has room to add strength and weight.
- > Reminds us of: Chris Volstad
- 5. ALEX WHITE, RHP, North Carolina
- ➤ What's to like? Forbes says White "gets better as the game goes on; (he's a) tremendous competitor that thrives on tough situations. Has an out pitch with his slider."
- ➤ Needs work: His slider needs some polishing, and he can improve his command on the two-seamer.
- > Reminds us of: Jake Peavy

- Ken Bradley

# High school prospects to watch

- 1. TYLER MATZEK, LHP, Capistrano Valley (Mission Viejo, Calif.)
- > What's to like? At 6-3, 210 and throwing at 93 to 95 mph, he's imposing on the mound. Pitching coach Goose Awender says, "It comes out of his hand very clean, very nice, very quickly."
- ➤ Needs work: His curveball and changeup are solid but could be better.
- > Reminds us of: Cole Hamels
- 2. DONAVAN TATE, OF, Cartersville (Ga.)
  What's to like? He's a top prep football player and signed with North Carolina after playing quarterback, safety and wide receiver for Cartersville. His athleticism is off the charts, and major league teams love his
- Needs work: He's still a little raw at the plate.
- > Reminds us of: Johnny Damon
- 3. SHELBY MILLER, RHP, Brownwood (Texas)
- > What's to like? His coach, Scotty Nichols,

- says Miller's "baseball abilities are amazing." Among those abilities—a fastball clocked in the high 90s,
- ➤ Needs work: His off-speed pitches have room to grow, but this Texas A&M recruit's breaking ball has good bite.
- > Reminds us of: Nolan Ryan
- 4. MATT DAVIDSON, 3B, Yucaipa (Calif.)
- ➤ What's to like? A USC recryit, he hits for power and average and is solid in the field with a great arm (he also pitches). Yucaipa coach Jeff Stout says four things will make Davidson a high selection: "Hitting ability, maturity level, body type and confidence."
- Needs work: He's not a blazer but is smart on the bases.
- > Reminds us of: David Wright
- **5. JACOB TURNER,** RHP, Westminster Christian Academy (St. Louis)
- ➤ What's to like? He's 6-5 and his coach, Rich Van Gilst, says "he can bring it—98 on a gun once this spring." A UNC recruit, he shows poise on the mound and the desire to get better.
- ➤ Needs work: He has room to improve when it comes to holding runners on base, and his breaking pitches aren't yet refined.
- Reminds us of: Jake Peavy

- Ken Bradley

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# Will's World

### 32-to-1

What are the odds of settling planet Earth's biggest debates?



Will Leitch is the author of three books, including God Save The Fan. He is the founding editor of Deadspin and a contributing editor at New York magazine. Get more of his opinions at leitch.tumblr.com.

The wonders that college basketball has provided the world are abundant. Bob Knight, Dick Vitale, Midnight Madness, George Mason, "One Shining Moment," Pistol Pete ... you could go on for days. But I might argue that the single lasting gift college basketball has given our planet Earth is the bracket.

Brackets are irresistible. There's a reason everyone in your office, come March, fills one out, even though some folks haven't watched a college basketball game in a decade. There's something simple, logical and definitive about a bracket: One competitor advances, and the other disappears off the page altogether, until only one champion is standing. The winner-take-all nature of humanity itself is perfectly, and succinctly, captured by a bracket. You can pretty much resolve anything with a bracket.

I'm obviously not the only one who thinks this. Editors Mark Reiter and Richard Sandomir have released The Final Four of Everything, their second book condensing all of life's mysteries and debates into the elegant



astronaut? The greatest breakfast cereal? The most effective Clint Eastwood film? The most accomplished bald guy? This book has a bracket for you.

The editors have asked writers and thinkers from around the country to contribute, and, proving they're equalopportunity guys, they even let a moron write one: me. I bracketed up the 32 best sports books written in the 21st century, with Michael Lewis' Moneyball barely edging out Jonathan Mahler's Ladies and Gentlemen, The Bronx Is Burning. (They already made a TV miniseries of the runner-up, and the other is coming out in 2011 as a movie with Brad Pitt playing A's G.M. Billy Beane. Who said being a general manager wasn't glamorous?) My bracket is the most poorly written, but it's not the only sports one. I'm particularly fond of the bracket analyzing the best athleteturned-actor. Did you realize NCIS star Mark Harmon was UCLA's starting quarterback for two seasons in the '70s?

Anyway, I think there's something profound and soothing about the NCAA Tournament bracket, something that lasts all year. The Super Bowl is the biggest event in sports, but it's not so powerful that it outshines everything else in the sport: It is, after all, just one game. The NCAA Tournament is unfair (why play 35 games all season and end up having a single-elimination tournament?), chaotic (the tournament has the 64 most important games of the season yet plays them in one mad rush) and democratically unparalleled in any other sport (imagine a committee deciding who qualifies for the NFL playoffs). And it is the single culminating event in one of our grand national pastimes, the centerpiece of the planet for a full month. I truly believe this is because of the bracket itself. It is unforgiving, cruel and absolute. It is judge, jury and executioner.

It is, really, America, capitalism, Darwinian survival of the fittest. And it's helping me explain the world in a way I'd never thought possible. So the next time you face a major life decision, I recommend coming up with 32 potential options. Place them into a bracket. And then face them off against each other. I bet your winner ends up being the right decision. I pronounce this method the Bracketologist Life Coach. I guarantee you'll have more success with it than the BCS Life Coach.

### **Bold, daring** predictions

At some point, Mark Cuban will suffer a personal disappointment, perhaps heading to the supermarket only to realize that the sale on Bagel Bites ended yesterday, and respond by screaming terrible things at someone's mother. Make sure Mom is, at all times, listening to the iPod you gave her.

After watching Glen "Big Baby" Davis this NBA postseason, I will quit going to the gym four times a week and simply eat cake all the time. Because, apparently, that works.



So what if Davis carries a few extra pounds? He's eating up opponents.

OK, new game. You will tell me who your absolute least favorite athlete is. The catch: It can't be someone generally considered despicable; Mike Tyson and Terrell Owens don't qualify. Pick the athlete everyone else seems to love who you absolutely cannot stand. E-mail me at will@deadspin.com, and I'll publish the most compelling case for hatred in the next column. Work up the bile, people!



### People of the Fortnight

Manny Ramirez. I can't be the only person who suspects that when the dingbat Dodgers slugger returns from his 50-game suspension, he'll hit three homers in his first game. Afterward, reporters will ask him for comment, and he will be stunned, having not realized he was suspended. He was just swinging away in his basement, unaware he wasn't at the stadium as usual. Good ol' Manny. "Oh, that's why everything seemed so quiet."

Don Majkowski. I, for one, have grown tired of the Majik Man's constant "I'm retired! I'm not retired!" act. For God's sake, man: You're 45 years old! Don't you realize the game has passed you by? I mean, sure, they loved you in Green Bay at one point, but those days are gone. It's over. Let it go. Wait, hang on a second ... OK, it appears I have the wrong Packers legend. Kind of.

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BY KEVIN YOUKILIS **RED SOX FIRST BASEMAN** 

It always was **PETEROSE**. You always wanted to play hard like Pete Rose. I always wanted to get as many hits as Pete Rose. When you grew up in Cincinnati like I did. it was always Pete Rose first.

There were a lot of other guys I followed as well-Eric Davis, Barry Larkin, Chris Sabo, Hal Morris. There were a lot of great Reds players growing up in that era, but Pete Rose was always No. 1. That was based on what your fathers told you and what you were able to watch at the end of his career.

I never got to meet him when I was a kid, but I did get to meet him later on in life and have always been a big fan. Being in Cincinnati and being the hit king and all that, he was what made Cincinnati in that era and generation what it was in baseball.

I don't remember the first time I saw him play. I was\_ probably about 3 years old at the time. But I do remember

Rose as far back as I can remember. That's probably because my dad was a huge Pete Rose fan. He had an autographed Rose picture and all kinds of stuff like that. I wasn't really big on autographs, so I didn't have one. I never was into that kind of stuff.

But I always greatly admired Rose as a player, and I've tried to pattern my game after his. I've always tried to hustle like he did. He was known for hustling all the time. And I've never forgotten that Rose never gave away an at-bat. That's something that I've always taken seriously my whole life in baseball-don't give away at-bats. Just go up there and hit.

- As told to Bill Eichenberger

PETE ROSE

Upon further review ... A photo of Notre Dame tight end Kyle Rudolph was incorrectly identified in the May 11 issue. ... Art Chansky, not John Feinstein, wrote Blue Blood/Duke-Carolina: Inside the Most Storied Rivalry in College Hoops. The information was incorrect in the May 11 issue.

# **Sports Biz**

# What Were They Thinking?

The Braves have never regretted drafting Jones

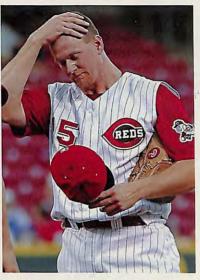
In 1990, the Atlanta Braves were coming off back-to-back seasons of 97 and 106 losses. The '90 season wouldn't be any better, except that they had the No. 1 pick in the June draft. Todd Van Poppel, a hardthrowing high school pitcher out of Arlington, Texas, was considered to be the guy. But a series of exchanges led the Braves on a path-they drafted Chipper Jones-they're glad they followed as Van Poppel, who went No. 14 to the A's, won just 40 games over parts of 11 seasons.

Jones, who was drafted straight out of The Bolles School in Jacksonville and still plays for Atlanta, and current Braves manager Bobby Cox (then the Braves' G.M.) discussed Jones' selection with Sporting News.

Cox: I talked to (Van Poppel's) dad. Henry Aaron talked to his dad. He was going to the University of Texas. He was going to school. And as it turned out, he didn't.

Jones: I was at my high school prom. I was at the beach. I didn't have a cell phone back then, and my dad didn't know how to get in touch with me. The Braves called and wanted to know my signability. (My parents) called all the parents up there (at the beach) to run me down. It ruined a perfectly good prom weekend to beat it back home





Jones has spent his entire career in a Braves uniform. Van Poppel, on the other hand, spent time in a total of nine organizations after the A's selected him in the 1990 draft.

to have a sit-down with the Braves.

Cox: There were pros and cons with both of them. Our scouts loved Chipper, though, and Chipper signed in five minutes. He said, "I'm not playing these college games. I'm going to sign. Make me an offer." Just like that.

Jones: They told me Todd Van Poppel didn't want to play for the Braves, and I looked them right in the eye and said, "I'll play for you." I'm a Southern kid. Every game is on TV. My parents, my family,

my friends get to see me play every night. I said, you sign me and I want to get to the big leagues as quickly as possible. They said, "What do you want moneywise?" and I said a number, they said a number, we met in the middle and it was over.

Cox: We knew he was going to do that. Really, you want guys that want to play right now.

Jones: I was actually signed, sealed and delivered the night before the draft.

- Ken Bradley, Stan McNeal

### THE OWNER'S BOX Robert Johnson, Charlotte Bobcats

- > The last luxury I indulged in was ... Attending the grand opening of the Atlantis in Dubai.
- > My business role model outside of sports is ... John Malone, chairman of Liberty Media, who helped me start BET.
- > i'm up and at 'em by ... I'm always on the clock.
- > Every morning, I read ... The Wall Street Journal.
- My exercise routine consists of ... Treadmill. abs and free weights four times a week, 45 minutes
- > My one unbreakable rule is ... Don't be afraid of hard work.
- > I'm frugal in that ... I squeeze the last drop out of the toothpaste tube.

- > Fans don't know how much I ... Appreciate
- > My philosophy on meetings is ... Keep them focused, keep them short.
- > The next big thing in sports is ... The Bobcats winning a championship.
- > The most beneficial class I took was ... European Diplomacy at Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School. It was beneficial because it taught me balance of power, politics and how leaders make decisions.
- > If I were king for a day ... I would try to be king from now on.

- Jeff D'Alessio

### SportsBusiness

### REPORT

- The average annual contract value for 205 NFL players who signed unrestricted free-agent deals from the start of free agency until May 6 was \$2.2 million. That's 13 percent higher than the \$1.95 million for 207 unrestricted free agents who signed in the same period last year.
- The Detroit Lions are paying No. 1 overall draft pick Matthew Stafford \$41.7 million in guaranteed money, but that's not enough to gain the quarterback a starring role in the team's forthcoming marketing campaign. Lions president Tom Lewand says the campaign, expected to launch midsummer, will be built around the themes of delivering on-field results and quality to fans and will not highlight individual players.



Matthew Stafford

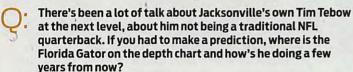
- The MLB Players Association is aiming to expand the new player-designed merchandise line it is creating with New York Mets players, with members of additional clubs potentially being added to the program in 2010.
- The NFL is negotiating to extend its television contracts with CBS and FOX by two years, sources say, taking the deals through the 2013 season. The development emerged as the league was said to be on the verge of settling its long-running dispute with Comcast over the cable distribution of NFL Network.

To sign up for the best sports business coverage anywhere, go to sportsbusinessjournal.com



# QUESTIONS FOR DAVID GARRARD

Quarterback David Garrard is 20 pounds lighter and has a new seven-time Pro Bowl receiver at his disposal as he tries to lead his team back to the playoffs after a one-year hiatus. Garrard, entering his eighth season with the Jacksonville Jaguars, took time from offseason workouts to answer questions from Sporting News readers.



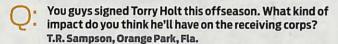
Fred Lewis, Daytona Beach, Fla.

**Garrard:** He won in high school, he's won in college and I'm sure he would win in the NFL. I could definitely see him fighting for a starting position somewhere—just hopefully not here in Jacksonville. He has the abilities—he knows how to make plays and he has the arm strength. I'm not sure why people don't think he has the arm. He just happens to be in a system in college that (is not a pro-style offense).

I know two people who suffer from Crohn's Disease and think it's great that you have talked openly about your dealings with it. How, if at all, does the disease affect your training and/or your performance?

Rich DeFalco, Warren, Ohio

Garrard: Luckily, I've been blessed not to be affected by the disease for very long. It was a few months in the (2004) offseason that I was in really bad shape. But I had surgery, they removed a foot of my intestines, I recovered from that physically and after that, I've been symptom-free. I've been able to eat whatever I want to. I've been able to work out the same way I did before I was diagnosed with the disease. I haven't had any effects of it since 2004. I owe a lot of it to prayer and a lot to the medicine Remicade, which I take every eight weeks intravenously.



Garrard: Torry's not a seven-time Pro Bowler just because of his great physical ability. He actually dissects defenses, he dissects the offense he's in, he learns every in and out of the offense so he can be at his best when game time comes around. He's very methodical in his approach to the game. He's texting me all the time: This would be a great route to run against the Titans. He's always texting our head coach. He wants to be the best, and I think that's great for this team. The young guys can see what it takes to be a true professional and a great player in this league; you have to put in the time and the effort. Seeing Torry do all those things really gives me confidence. I know that when we line up on Sundays, I can count on him in every play. And he's going to be able to count on me.

### You lost 20 pounds this offseason. How'd you do it—Jenny Craig or Weight Watchers?

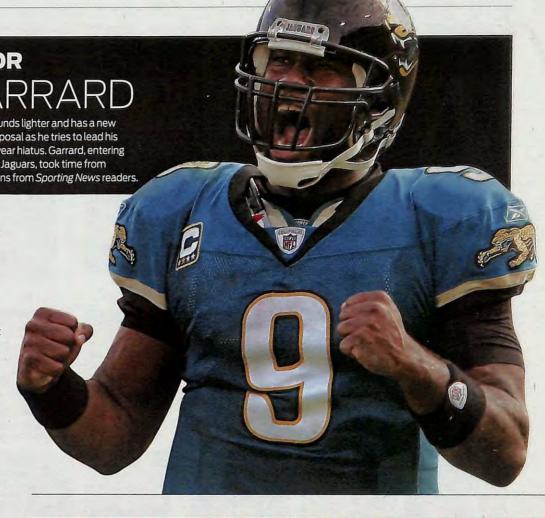
Janet Mahar, Raleigh, N.C.

Garrard: (Laughs) Neither. Basically, I did it by cutting all complex carbs for three weeks. I didn't eat any breads, sugars, pastas or anything that was seasoned with sugars. I was really strict. I'd have a low-carb shake for breakfast. Then for lunch, I'd have a regular salad with a little shrimp or chicken on it and another shake, or I'd substitute it with an apple or some strawberries. Then the same type of thing for dinner. You would not believe how much weight you can drop within the first three days if you don't bring in any carbs. I feel great now. I'm back to eating those complex carbs, but my stomach has shrunk and I don't have the urge I used to.

Unlike a lot of pro athletes, you had a job as a teenager—
 working as a cook at Burger King. Your best BK story?
 Ed Eisenhower, Tempe, Ariz.

 $\label{lem:Garrard: My best Burger King story would be how many chicken tenders I could eat before my shift was up. That helped me be one of the bigger quarterbacks in college. You could eat for free—especially when nobody was looking.$ 

- Jeff D'Alessio







DONBAYLOR 1979 A.L. MVP



**GLENN BECKERT** 4-time All-Star



ANDY BENES 1994 N.L. strikeouts leader



VIDA BLUE 1971 A.L. MVP



MIKE BODDICKER 1983 ALCS MVP



BRET BOONE 3-time All-Star



BILL BUCKNER 1980 N.L. batting champ



GENE BUDIG Former A.L. president



**GLENN DAVIS** 2-time All-Star



MARK DAVIS 1989 N.L. Cy Young winner 1962-63 N.L. batting champ



TOMMY DAVIS



ANDRE DAWSON 1987 N.L. MVP



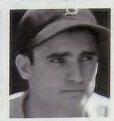
DOUG DECINCES Orioles Hall of Famer



JIM DESHAIES Astros TV analyst



LARRY DIERKER 1998 N.L. manager of year



**BOBBY DOERR** Hall of Famer



RAY FOSSE 2-time All-Star



**JIM FREGOSI** Managed four teams



**BOB FRIEND** 1955 N.L. ERA champ



RONGANT 2-time All-Star



**PHIL GARNER** Managed three teams



**DAVE GIUSTI** 



1971 N.L. saves leader



RANDY JONES



1976 N.L. Cy Young winner



1987 A.L. saves leader



1988 N.L. Cy Young winner



Famed hitting coach



STEVE LYONS Dodgers analyst



**FERGUSON JENKINS** 

Hall of Famer

**GREG MADDUX** 4-time Cy Young winner



**DENNIS MARTINEZ** 1991 N.L. ERA leader



SN'swell-stocked panel-which includes 13 Hall of Famers, 13 Cy Young winners and 12 league MVPs-gave Cardinals first baseman



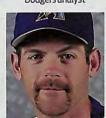
**DENNIS LEONARD** 3-time 20-game winner



1967 A.L. Cy Young winner



1975 A.L. MVP



**GREGG OLSON** 1989 A.L. rookie of year



PAUL O'NEILL 1994 A.L. batting champ



TONY PEREZ Hall of Famer



1963 A.L. rookie of year



RICO PETROCELLI Red Sox Hall of Famer



MIKE MUSSINA

5-time All-Star

TOM SEAVER Hall of Famer



PHIL NIEKRO

Hall of Famer

**BOBBY SHANTZ** 1952 A.L. MVP



**BILLY NORTH** 

2-time A.L. steals leader

NORM SHERRY Former Angels manager



**BUCK SHOWALTER** 2-time A.L. manager of year



**ROY SIEVERS** 1949 A.L. rookie of year



JIM SUNDBERG 6-time Gold Glove winner



RON SWOBODA Amazin' Mets outfielder



FRANK TANANA 1977 A.L. ERA leader



DONBUFORD 1971 A.L. runs leader



JIM BUNNING Hall of Famer



BILL CAMPBELL 1977 A.L. saves leader



SEAN CASEY 3-time All-Star



PHILCAVARRETTA LEONARDCOLEMAN 1945 N.L. MVP



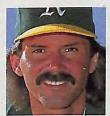
Former N.L. president



**PAT CORRALES** Managed three teams



**ERIC DAVIS** 2-time All-Star



DENNIS ECKERSLEY Hall of Famer



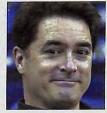
**DOCEDWARDS** Managed Indians



LEE ELIA Managed Cubs, Phillies



CARLERSKINE Threw 2 no-hitters



**DAN EVANS** Former Dodgers G.M.



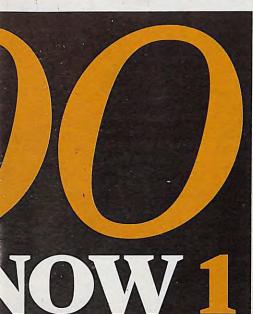
**ROLLIE FINGERS** Hall of Famer

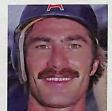


STEVE FINLEY 5-time Gold Glove winner



MIKE FLANAGAN 1979 A.L. Cy Young winner





**BOBBY GRICH** 6-time All-Star



TOM GRIEVE Former Rangers G.M.



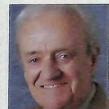
**TONY GWYNN** Hall of Famer



ATLEE HAMMAKER 1983 N.L. ERA leader



KENHARRELSON 1968 A.L. RBI leader



ROLAND HEMOND 2-time SN executive of year



**ED KRANEPOOL** Mets' career hits leader



**DUANE KUIPER** Giants radio, TV analyst



**BILL LAJOIE** Former Tigers G.M.



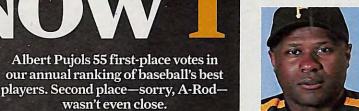
**BARRY LARKIN** 1995 N.L. MVP



**VERNLAW** 1960 N.L. Cy Young winner



JIM LEFEBVRE 1965 N.L. rookie of year



LLOYDMCCLENDON Former Pirates manager



WILLIEMCCOVEY Hall of Famer



FRED MCGRIFF 1989 A.L., '92 N.L. HR champ



**DENNY MCLAIN** 2-time A.L. Cy Young winner



**BILL MELTON** 1971 A.L. HR champ



**STAN MUSIAL** Hall of Famer



wasn't even close.

**DAVE PHILLIPS** 4-time World Series umpire



**STEVE PHILLIPS** ESPN analyst



**BILLY PIERCE** 2-time SNA.L pitcher of year



**BRAD RADKE** Twins Hall of Famer



**VERN RAPP** Managed Cardinals, Reds



BOBBY RICHARDSON BROOKS ROBINSON 1960 World Series MVP



Hall of Famer



1993 A.L. rookie of year



RALPH TERRY 1962 World Series MVP



GORMANTHOMAS 1979, '82 A.L. HR champ



TOM TREBELHORN Managed Brewers, Cubs



LARRY WALKER 1997 N.L. MVP



Author



Managed Angels, A's



JIMMY WYNN 1974 N.L. comeback player



DON ZIMMER 1989 N.L. manager of year

### Albert Pujols, 1B, CARDINALS

Past forward: As he turned 29, Hank Aaron had 298 home runs; Pujols had 319. Frank Robinson had 879 RBIs; Pujols had 977. Mickey Mantle had a .307 average; Pujols was at .334. The runaway winner with our panelists, Pujols piled up 55 first-place votes.

Frank Robinson says: "First, he's the best hitter in baseball right now. But also, you could put him at any position—first, third, outfield—and he could play it like an All-Star. That's why he's the top player in the game."

### **WE HAD TO ASK**

What have your matchups against Albert Pujols been like?

Brad Lidge, RP, Phillies: "I have no problem looking back at (allowing a Game 5 home run to Pujols while playing for the Astros in the 2005 ALCS) and saying a great hitter beat me. If you're going to make a mistake, he's the guy you expect to beat you. I mean if he missed it, you almost wouldn't have expected that. He barreled it, no question."

Josh Johnson, SP, Marlins: "Last year, first inning, in St. Louis. I had him 2-2. He fouled off three pitches, then hit a home run off me. The ball just came back over the middle and he hit it. It was just one of those mistakes that he just crushes. He sprays the ball all over the field. He hits every mistake. You rarely ever see him miss one."

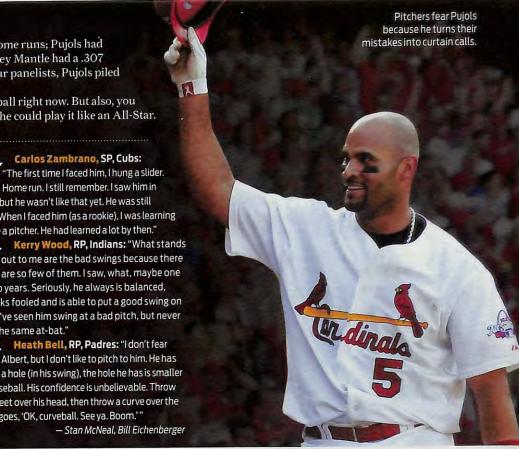
### Carlos Zambrano, SP, Cubs:

'The first time I faced him, I hung a slider. Home run. I still remember. I saw him in Single-A, but he wasn't like that yet. He was still learning. When I faced him (as a rookie), I was learning how to be a pitcher. He had learned a lot by then."

out to me are the bad swings because there are so few of them. I saw, what, maybe one every two years. Seriously, he always is balanced, rarely looks fooled and is able to put a good swing on the ball. I've seen him swing at a bad pitch, but never twice in the same at-bat."

Heath Bell, RP, Padres: "I don't fear Albert, but I don't like to pitch to him. He has a hole (in his swing), the hole he has is smaller than a baseball. His confidence is unbelievable. Throw a pitch 2 feet over his head, then throw a curve over the plate. He goes, 'OK, curveball. See ya. Boom.' "

- Stan McNeal, Bill Eichenberger



### 2 Alex Rodriguez, 3B, YANKEES

Past forward: He'll forever have an asterisk beside his name, but 11 members of our panel still picked A-Rod No. 1 after watching him amass more career homers than Mickey Mantle, more RBIs than Al

Kaline and more runs than Rogers Hornsby by age 33. Al Kaline says: "He has put up some great numbers, but I don't like to talk too much about guys who've had some steroids issues. I don't like to build up those players. That's

more or less glorifying somebody who has cheated."

### Manny Ramirez, LF, DODGERS



Past forward: A 12-time All-Star, Ramirez has hit more career postseason homers than anyone. He could join Tony Perez, Roberto Clemente and Tony Oliva as the most accomplished Latino position players

ever, but his 50-game suspension will hurt his legacy.

Tony Oliva says: "You don't want to see Manny Ramirez come to the plate with the game on the line. That guy is a very tough hitter. I don't think there's anybody better in the clutch."

### Hanley Ramirez, SS, MARLINS

Past forward: Three N.L. shortstops have had 81 or more extra-base hits in a season-Ernie Banks (1955, '57, '58), Jimmy Rollins (2007) and Ramirez ('07), whose career numbers through three full seasons compare favorably to Derek Jeter's.

Ernie Banks says: "He's the new breed of shortstop-tall, has range, can run, can hit for power. I mean, come on, he can do it all."

Johan Santana, SP, METS

Past forward: Santana is one of five lefthanded pitchers to win multiple Cy Young awards, joining Sandy Koufax, Randy Johnson, Steve Carlton and Tom Glavine. With another 200 strikeouts this year, he'll crack the top 100 in just his 10th season and pass Carl Hubbell and Dave Stewart, among others.

Dave Stewart says: "There are some guys you look at today and say, 'This guy could have pitched in my time.' There are a lot of big-name guys today that couldn't have, but Johan would have fit right into that period when guys completed games, threw a whole lot of innings and always got matched up with other No. 1 starters."

### **WE HAD TO ASK**

Why is Johan Santana so tough to bit?

Hanley Ramirez, SS, Marlins: "Who says he's difficult to hit? No, I'm just kidding. He is good. He has the same motion on all his pitches, whether a changeup or fastball. His motion is exactly the same. So you don't know what is coming." Torii Hunter, CF, Angels: "When he was

with the Twins and I was playing with him, he was throwing 95, 96 miles per hour with that

nasty changeup. Now he's down to like 92, 93, maybe 94 once in a while, and he still has that great changeup. Usually when you go down in velocity, your changeup is not as effective. But Johan is a bulldog. He wants the ball every day. When there is a man on third, I've never seen a guy bear down like him. When there is a runner in scoring position, he's dirty. I'd be in center field and I couldn't believe it. It would look like cartoons. His ball would duck under bats like it had eyes."

Bobby Abreu, RF, Angels: "He just always comes right at you. He has such a good changeup. Everybody knows he is going

to throw it, but it is still hard to hit. That is one of the things that makes him so tough. He just goes out there and dominates the game. He's one of those guys who, when he gets a 1- or 2-run lead, he's going to hold it, no matter what.

Jason Varitek, C, Red Sox: "He has a great changeup. It's a plus, plus, plus pitch for him. But it is his ability to use his other pitches with that (changeup) that makes him so tough. He also has a very explosive fastball. It's a combination of both."

Grady Sizemore, CF, Indians: "A lot of guys have about as much difference in the speed of their fastball and their changeup,

but what makes him different is his release. The way he's able to make his changeup (look like) a fastball coming out makes him tough."

- Bill Eichenberger and Stan McNeal





Past forward: Hank Aaron's favorite player to watch, the threetime All-Star is one

of three second basemen to rack up four consecutive 100-RBI seasons. The others: Jeff Kent (six, from 1997-2002) and Charlie Gehringer (five, from 1932-36).

Hank Aaron says: "I love him. I really can't say there's a better player than him right now. He plays the game the way I remember it. He's a throwback."



Derek Jeter, SS, YANKEES

Past forward: Sure to one day join Yogi, Whitey, Mickey and the Babe in Monument Park, the 34-year-old captain is No. 2 in Yankees career hits, No. 4 in runs and No. 5 in batting average.

Yogi Berra says: "Should he be this high on the list? Oh, yeah. He's a pretty damn good ballplayer. I think he's a Hall of Famer."



**JETER IS NO. 1** IN MY BOOK

When I look at Derek Jeter. I see a champion. The captain. A guy with the "it" factor. A guy who handles whatever comes his way with so much savvy and cool we just shake our heads. During my career,

I was giddy around a few players: Cal Ripken, Mark McGwire, Albert Pujols and Jeter. When we're talking about the best player in the game, I'll make my case for Jeter.

Jeter always seems to be in the middle of big moments because he is involved in every pitch of every game. He always is directing, teaching, focusing and grinding. He isn't a guy who puts on his game face only when the red light comes on. Because he plays the same way in May as he does in October, he is prepared for big moments because he is playing the game at the same speed he always does. Jeter seems to anticipate the unexpected.

Jeter is respected by all his peers, he has the biggest city in the land eating out of his hands,

and he never has made the kind of mistake that I have to explain to my son.

When I'm 80 and telling my grandkids about playing in the big leagues, his will be one of the first names I'll drop. I'll tell them, "I had the honor of pitching and competing against Derek Jeter. He was one of the best."

Todd Jones, a former major league closer, is a regular contributor to Sporting News.



Mariano Rivera, RP, YANKEES Past forward: Most

consider Whitey Ford the greatest Yankees pitcher of them all. But a case could be made for

this clutch closer, who has more than twice as many saves in the Bronx as No. 2 Dave Righetti and has pitched in 300-plus more games than any other Yankee.

Whitey Ford says: "I think he's one of the best Yankee pitchers I've ever seen. He's certainly the best closer."

### Chipper Jones, 3B, BRAVES Past forward: The



2008 N.L. batting champ has long-since passed Dale Murphy for the most home runs in

an Atlanta uniform and is on Frankie Frisch's heels for the highest career batting average by a switch hitter.

Dale Murphy says: "He's 37. I retired at 37. At that age, most guys are getting worse and worse, but he's a better all-around hitter than ever. That's what I like best about him."

### **MY LINEUP**



Sporting News asked two-time World Series-winning manager Terry Francona of the Red Sox to make a

lineup card featuring the top vote-getters at each position. "This is almost impossible," says Francona, who ordered them this way:



- Jeff D'Alessio

### JUST ONE OUESTION

For Fredi Gonzalez, 2008 SN N.L. manager of the year: What makes Hanley Ramirez a top five player?

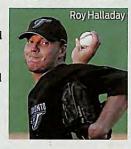
"I don't know if he's in the top five, but it wouldn't take very long for you to find his name somewhere. I think he can be in the top five, but I don't think he's there right now. But surely he is in the upper third, the top 15. He's one of those guys that, when he steps on the field, he tilts it, whether it is hitting, baserunning or defense. He can do all that stuff. And there are not many guys who can do all those things. What he does best is on offense. This guy can hit for power and average."

### Roy Halladay, SP, BLUE JAYS **3 QUESTIONS WITH...**

Past forward: At 138-67, the lifelong Blue Jay's career winning percentage of .673 ranks 10th all time. That puts SN's 2003 A.L. pitcher of the year ahead of Hall of Famers Sandy Koufax, Bob Feller, Tom Seaver and Robin Roberts, among others.

Robin Roberts says: "Well, I don't think there's a better pitcher than him.

He throws strikes, he has good stuff, and he shows up a lot. He makes every turn and will give you eight innings. He's fun to watch, too."



J.P Ricciardi, Blue Jays senior V.P. of baseball operations and general manager

Q: Just how good is Roy Halladay? A: He's the best pitcher in baseball. It's not even a question from our end. It's not taking anything away from anybody else. But we see him day in and day out. Shame on any young pitcher who is on a team with him or in an opposing dugout who doesn't watch what he does. He's the best example of what an ace should be.

### Q: What ace-like characteristics does be possess?

A: He competes. When he doesn't have his best stuff, he competes. He knows how to pitch. He pitches to contact. He doesn't look to strike people out unless he's in an opportunity to strike people out. He has a great work ethic, great preparation, all the things you want a consummate ace to be. His stuff is filthy—anywhere from 90 to 94 (mph), sink, cut, curveball. He's got a good change, too, that he doesn't use as much as he probably could. And he's a strike machine.

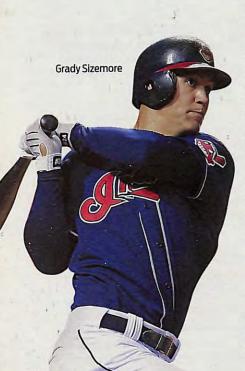
### Q: He's kind of a bulldog, too, isn't he?

A: Big-time bulldog. (Earlier this season), we were winning, 9-2, he gave up a hit, and he was stomping around the mound.

- Matt Crossman

### Ryan Howard, 18, PHILLIES

Past forward: If he continues to average a homer every 12.0 at-bats, the Phillies slugger will pass Ralph Kiner later this season as the player to reach 200 homers in the fewest at-bats. Howard already has three seasons with at least 47 homers.



### **P** Grady Sizemore,

Past forward: In 2008, the two-time Gold Glove winner became the first Indian with four consecutive seasons of at least 20 home runs and 20 stolen bases. He also became the first Indian since Shoeless Joe Jackson (1911-14) to lead the club in hits for four straight seasons.

### **HEAD TO HEAD**

With Al Oliver, seven-time All-Star outfielder-first baseman and career .303 hitter

Better center fielder-the Mets' Carlos Beltran or the Indians' Grady Sizemore?



"I would lean toward Sizemore because of his age and longevity. Sizemore could

be a rally starter, one who could hit at the top of the lineup-first, second or third-for a longer time."

Matt Crossman

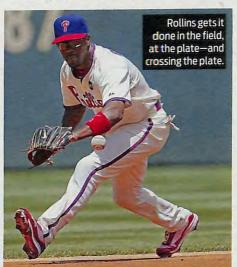


### Justin Morneau, 18, TWINS

Past forward: In 2006, the pride of British Columbia became the only Canadian to win the A.L MVP award. The following year, he became the first Twin to hit 30-plus home runs in consecutive seasons since Gary Gaetti (1986-87).

### Jimmy Rollins, SS, PHILLIES

Past forward: From his first full season, in 2001, through last season, the 2007 N.L. MVP averaged 105 runs, second-most in the league after Albert Pujols. Through age 29, he has crossed home plate more than Hall of Fame middle infielders Ryne Sandberg and Bobby Doerr had at that age.



### **WEHAD TO ASK**

You can't vote for a teammate, so who would you punch your All-Star ballot for at ...

SHORTSTOP Carlos Beltran, CF, Mets: "I would have to say Jimmy Rollins. He's one of the best at his position. He's a Gold Glove-type

fielder, and at the same time he puts up big numbers at the plate."

CATCHER

Jered Weaver, SP, Angels: "That's a tough question. There are a lot of good ones out there. I'm going to have to go with Jason Varitek. He works well with his pitching staff. He always puts it all out there on the line every day."

THIRD BASE

Mark Teixeira, 1B, Yankees: "I'd vote for Michael Young because he's a

quality player and good buddy of mine. Plus, he just started playing third base. So he's going to need all the votes he can get."

- Bill Eichenberger



### **Josh Beckett**,



Past forward: Big-game Beckett has won his past

six postseason decisions, two shy of Orlando Hernandez's record. Beckett has a 7-2 career playoff record, with a 2.90 ERA and 96 strikeouts in 87 innings.

### Mark Teixeira,



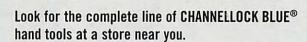
Past forward: He struck it rich-eight years, \$180 million-after

last year joining Jimmie Foxx and Albert Pujols as the only first basemen with five consecutive seasons of more than 30 homers and 100 RBIs by age 28. The 144 RBIs Teixeira produced for the Rangers in 2005 is the best total ever for a switch hitter.

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### **HEAD TO HEAD**

With Ryne Sandberg, Hall of Fame second baseman and 10-time All-Star

Better second baseman-the Red Sox's Dustin Pedroia or the Phillies' Chase Utley?



"I'd go with Chase Utley. Nothing against Pedroia, but I like the way Utley goes about the game, his no-nonsense approach to the game. I like the fact he's a lefthanded hitter, which you don't always find in the middle infield. I like his constant aggressiveness and approach to the game."

- Ken Bradley



### Tim Lincecum, SP, GIANTS

**Dustin Pedroia** 

Past forward: How's this for a sophomore year: At 24 last year, Lincecum became the youngest pitcher to win a Cv Young award since Roger Clemens in 1986, and his 265 strikeouts broke the franchise's modern-era single-season record previously held by Jason Schmidt.

### **JUST ONE QUESTION**

For Matt Holliday, 2007 N.L. batting champ and A's left fielder:

Which pitcher from SN's top 50 most impresses you?



"Tim Lincecum. He's got three of the better pitches in the game. All three of his pitches are top of the line."

- Matt Crossman

### lose Reves, ss, METS

Past forward: During his first six seasons in the majors, the N.L.'s reigning hits king and two-time All-Star stole 290 bases. Hall of Famer Lou Brock, No. 2 on the career steals list, had 272 after his first six full seasons. Reves' career is off

### GIMME 5



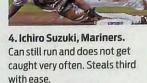
Four-time All-Starcatcher Terry Kennedy's

five basestealers he's glad he doesn't have to try to throw out:

1. Jose Reyes, Mets. Explosive jump makes him No. 1.

2. Carl Crawford, Rays. Smart and makes good reads. Percentage much higher than Reyes'.

3. Jimmy Rollins, Phillies. Picks spots so he doesn't take a power team out of the inning.



to a running start.

5. Willy Taveras, Reds. Can't steal first. Must cut down on strikeouts and improve his OBP. - Jeff D'Alessio



### **23** Carlos Beltran, CF, METS

Past forward: In his first 10 full seasons, Beltran hit 263 homers and stole 272 bases. That compares favorably to 1987 N.L. MVP

Andre Dawson, who had 225 homers and 252 steals after 10 vears. And unlike Dawson, Beltran has had a 30-30 season.

### Ian Kinsler, 2B, RANGERS

Past forward: Kinsler's first three years (.290 average, 52 homers, 187 RBIs) with the Rangers are very similar to Jeff Kent's first three years (.270 average, 46 homers, 198 RBIs) in the big leagues. Kinsler, though, already has 67 stolen bases; Kent finished his outstanding 17-year career with 94.

### **ALL ABOUT ME**

With Ian Kinsler, Rangers All-Star second baseman Ever think, when the Rangers drafted you in the 17th round six years ago, that you'd be this high on the list?

"I never thought of lists or anything like that. I just tried to be the best player I could every game. Nothing has changed now that I'm in the bigs."

- Jeff D'Alessio



Evan Longoria, 3B, RAYS Past forward: After starting the season in the minors, Longoria finished 2008 as the first unanimous A.L. rookie of the

year winner since Nomar Garciaparra in 1997. He led all rookies with 27 home runs-then hit a rookie-record six in the playoffs.

## **21** Lance Berkman,

Past forward: Big Puma needs 153 homers to pass fellow Astros lifer Jeff Bagwell for the

franchise's all-time lead. Berkman is averaging a homer every 16.6 at-bats; Bagwell connected once every 17.4 at-bats. At that rate, Berkman will pass Bagwell during the 2013 season.

### **Zack Greinke, SP, ROYALS**

Past forward: Bret Saberhagen owns the finest season by a Royals starting pitcher (23-6, 2.16 ERA, 12 complete games), but Greinke could

bump Saberhagen down a spot in Kansas City's record book if he builds on his fast start. In his first eight games, Greinke had seven wins, a 0.60 ERA and four complete games.

### **WE HAD TO ASK**

Your White Sox have been . shut out in 15 innings this season against Royals ace Zack Greinke. What's the secret to bis amazing start?

Jim Thome, DH: "His stuff really hasn't changed much. He's just got that confidence and is dominating the strike zone. I've always said a player is destined to have

that career magical year, and he has that going in his favor."



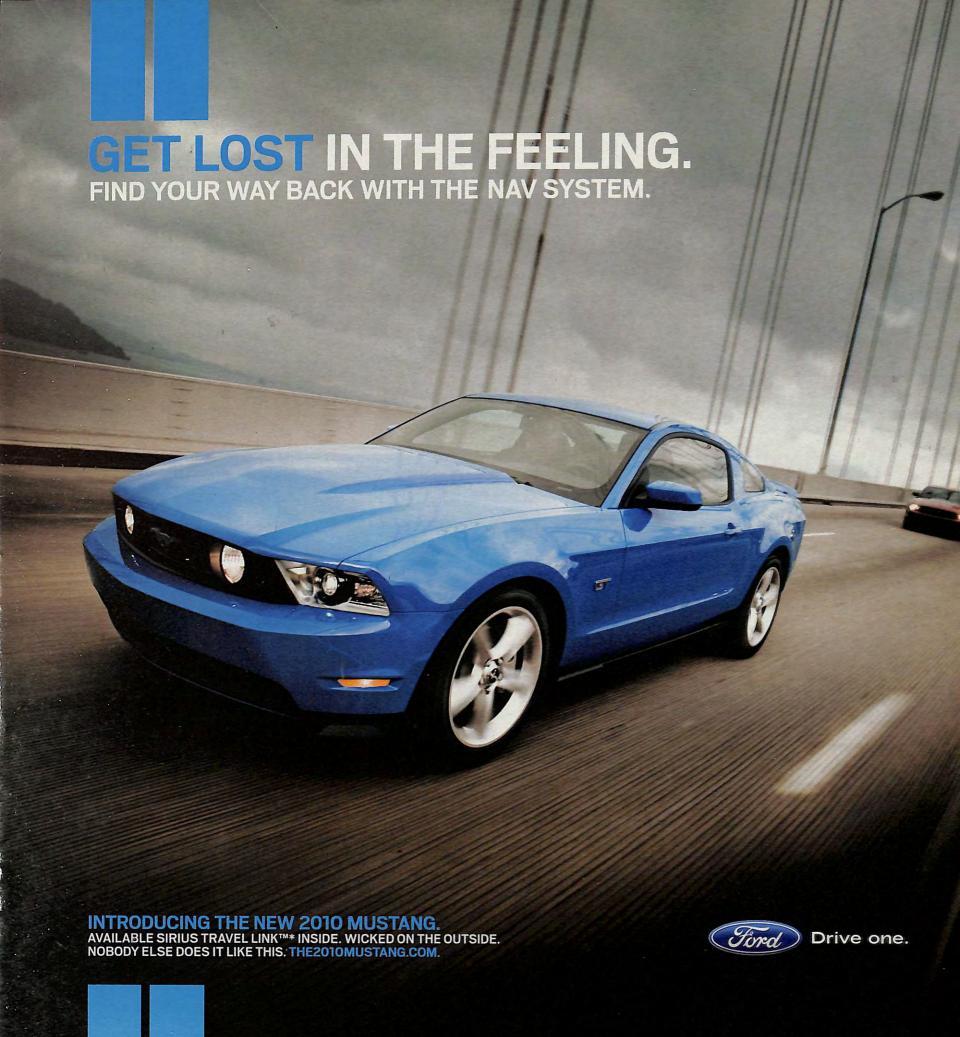
Carlos Quentin, LF: "I compare him to Tim Lincecum. He has a plus fastball with a plus slider, and he's able to locate all of

his pitches." A.J. Pierzynski, C: "He's always had the good stuff. He's just

always made mistakes. This year, it doesn't seem like he's making very many."

- Stan McNeal







CF. RANGERS Past forward: In 2008, his first full season with the Rangers,

Hamilton hit 32 homers and drove in 130 runs. Juan Gonzalez, the franchise's all-time leader in homers and RBIs, went deep 27 times and drove in 102 runs in his first season with Texas.

### Alfonso Soriano,

LF. CUBS



Past forward: He's the sole member of baseball's 40-40

club not linked to steroids-Alex Rodriguez, Barry Bonds and Jose Canseco are the others. Soriano has three 40-steal seasons in his career: of the other 40-40 guys, only Bonds had more than one 40-steal season.

Miguel Cabrera, 18, TIGERS Past forward: At 25, Cabrera already had four 30-plus-homer seasons-three with Florida, one with Detroit. That is only two fewer than Tigers first

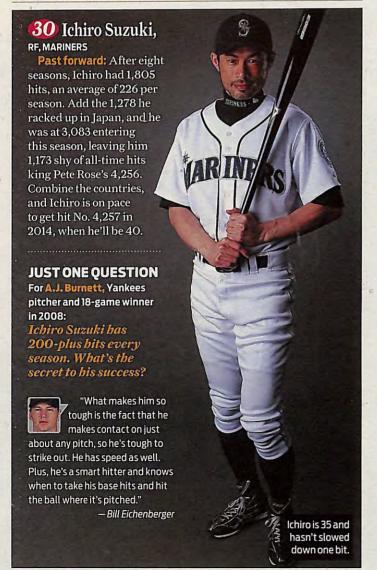
baseman Hank Greenberg had in his Hall of Fame career.



### CC Sabathia, SP, YANKEES

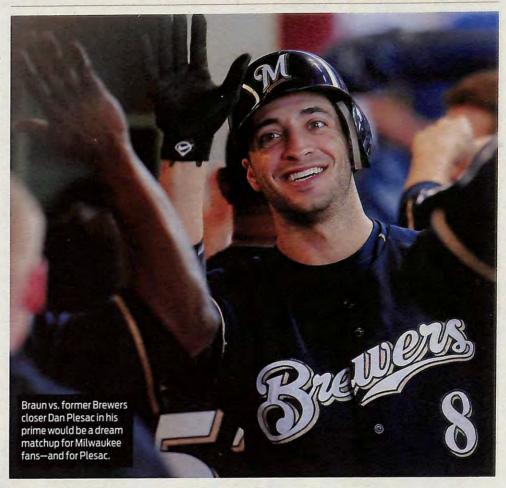
Past forward: Eight seasons into his major league career, Sabathia has followed a Steve Carlton-like path. From 2001-08, the big lefthander was 117-73 with a

3.66 ERA in 254 starts. Carlton went 130-102 with a 3.05 ERA in 286 games (281 starts) from 1967-74.



Brandon Webb, SP, DIAMONDBACKS

Past forward: The 2006 N.L. Cy Young winner, three-time All-Star and 22-game winner in 2008 is sidelined by a shoulder injury. But Webb already ranks second in wins, strikeouts, shutouts and innings pitched in Diamondbacks history, trailing only Randy Johnson.



Ryan Braun, LF, BREWERS

Past forward: The 2007 N.L. rookie of the year swatted just three fewer homers (71) and drove in only five fewer runs (203) in his first two seasons than Hall of Fame outfielder Ralph Kiner did in his first two seasons.

### **WE HAD TO ASK**

As a television analyst who used to play the game, if you could face any current player while in your prime, who would it be?



Dan Plesac, MLB Network: "Ryan Braun. He's one of the best young righthanded hitters in baseball. It'd be a challenge to try to keep him in the ballpark."



Harold Reynolds, MLB Network: "I'd like to face Johan Santana, He's one of the best pitchers in the game, and I'd like to see how I could do against him."

Dave Valle, MLB Network: "Felix Hernandez. He's one of the most exciting young pitchers, and I think he's going to be a superstar. He brings great energy to the mound every time he starts, and he's one of the bright young stars of the game that people come to see-like Pedro Martinez was for so many years."



**Brian Jordan, FOX** Sports South: "Tim Lincecum. Lincecum's arm motion is deceiving to hitters, and he throws incredibly hard for a righthander."



Frank White, FOX Sports Kansas City: "Zack Greinke. Maybe you've got to

be stupid to pick Zack right now, but if you're looking for a challenge and want to create some memories for yourself, then Zack is the guy. It's kind of like facing Nolan Ryan when I was playing. You know it is going to be a tough challenge."

- Matt Crossman, Ken Bradley, Stan McNeal

Dan Haren. SP. DIAMONDBACKS



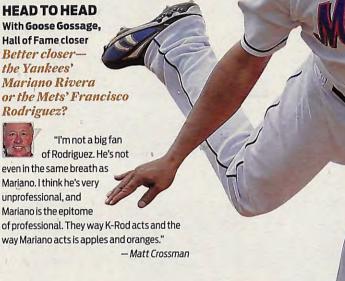
Past forward: In his first four full seasons as a starter. Haren went 59-42 with a 3.56 ERA and two All-Star appearances. In his first four full seasons as a starter, Pedro Martinez went 63-35 with a 2.95 ERA and three All-Star appearances.

Past forward: Owner of the singleseason saves record (62 in 2008), Rodriguez struck out 90-plus batters in each of his first five full seasons in the majors. Lee Smith, who is third in career saves, did so only three times in his first five full seasons.

**HEAD TO HEAD** With Goose Gossage. Hall of Fame closer Better closer the Yankees' Mariano Rivera or the Mets' Francisco Rodriguez?

way Mariano acts is apples and oranges."

Matt Holliday, LF, A'S



Past forward: At age 28,

Holliday had hit more home

runs (128) and had a higher

seven-time All-Star and N.L.

batting average (.319) than

MVP Dave Parker (109, .318) and nine-time

All-Star and 1975 A.L. MVP Fred Lynn

(124, .308) at the same age.

**36** Kevin Youkilis, 18, RED SOX



Past forward: If Youkilis manages to keep his on-base percentage above .500 this season, the 2008 All-Star will be the first A.L. player to top

Francisco

Rodriguez

that mark since 1957, when Hall of Famers Mickey Mantle (.512) and Ted Williams (.526) did so.

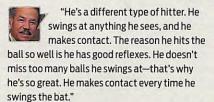
Vladimir Guerrero,

Past forward: At age 34, the 2004 A.L. MVP has more homers (393) and doubles (404) and a better career batting average (.322) than Jim Rice (382-373-.298), who will be inducted into the Hall of Fame this summer, did when he retired at age 36.

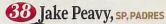
### JUST ONE QUESTION

For Juan Marichal, Hall of Fame pitcher and 243-game winner:

What makes Vladimir Guerrero such a great bitter?



- Matt Crossman



Past forward: Peavy, the 2007 N.L. Cy Young winner, after his first five full seasons in the Padres' rotation: 70-44, 3.19 ERA, 1,000 strikeouts. John Smoltz, the 1996 N.L. Cy Young winner, after his

first five full seasons in the Braves' rotation: 70-58, 3.42 ERA, 909 strikeouts.

### Joe Mauer, c, twins

Past forward: In the 35 years before the 2009 season. Mauer had the highest batting average (.318) among catchers. Twelve-time All-Star Mike Piazza was second (.313). Mauer, a two-time A.L. batting champ, is the only catcher to lead the A.L. in hitting.

### **JUST ONE OUESTION**

For Joakim Soria, Royals closer who converted 42 of 45 save chances in 2008: What makes Twins catcher Joe Mauer such a tough out?



"(He's) a great hitter. He is not fooled very much. Always seems to get a good swing on the pitch."

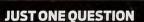
- Stan McNeal



Mauer has few-if any-peers among catchers when it comes to hitting for average.

### Carlos Quentin, LF, WHITESOX

Past forward: In 2008, his first season with the White Sox, Quentin hit 36 homers and drove in 100 runs. In 1972, seven-time All-Star Dick Allen hit 37 homers and drove in 113 runs in his first season with the White Sox.



For Mark Buehrle, White Sox lefthander and three-time All-Star: Why did outfielder Carlos Quentin succeed in Chicago after struggling in Arizona?

"In the short time he was in Arizona, he didn't put up the kind of numbers he put up here. Obviously, he's had the talent, a former first-round pick. But never seeing him before, what he did surprised a lot of people. As the season moved along, you see some guys doing stuff. You think it's a fluke and they'll come back down to reality. With him, he just kept going. As the season went along, he got more and more comfortable. You knew what he was doing wasn't a fluke."

- Stan McNeal







[In Jason Bay, LF, RED SOX

Past forward: Pittsburgh's only rookie of the year (2004), Bay has a .471 postseason on-base percentage that ranks seventh all-time for players with at least 40 plate appearances. He's sandwiched between Lou Gehrig (.477) and Babe Ruth (.467).

### JUST ONE OUESTION

For Dwight Evans, 19-year Red Sox outfielder and three-time All-Star:

The Red Sox got Jason Bay when they gave up Manny Ramirez. When it's all said and done, will Bay be worth it?



"Bay is part of the puzzle and he makes that puzzle fit together. Over the long haul or short haul, you might say

Manny is better and we miss Manny, but Manny was an issue in the clubhouse and so it made Manny a detriment to the ballclub the longer he stayed there. He needed to go, and Jason Bay was a breath of fresh air that solidified our team. I'm very impressed with the way he goes about his routine and the way he plays the game."

- Ken Bradley



### Chad Billingsley, SP, DODGERS

Past forward: In his first three seasons in the majors, Billingsley had one more victory than Dodgers great and Hall of Famer Don Drysdale (35 to 34) and 67 more strikeouts in 94 fewer innings.



### Cliff Lee, SP. INDIANS

Past forward: How's this for bouncing back? After a 5-8

2007 season, Lee's winning percentage of .880 in 2008 is tied for sixth-best all-time for pitchers with at least 20 starts, and it's the best by a Cy Young winner since Greg Maddux and Randy Johnson in 1995.

### JUST ONE OUESTION

For Carl Crawford, two-time All-Star and Rays' all-time hits leader:

What was Cliff Lee doing so well last year that helped him win the Cy Young award?



"He had a good breaking ball, and as a lefty it was hard for me to pick up. He was just making all his pitches. He was spotting his pitches just where he wanted them. He had command on both sides of the plate."

- Bill Eichenberger



### Torii Hunter, CF. ANGELS

Past forward: Hunter, winner of

eight consecutive Gold Gloves, is seventh on the Twins' all-time home run list with 192-just 15 behind Hall of Famer Kirby Puckettand ranks 10th in fewest at-bats per home run (23.396).



Victor Martinez. C/1B, INDIANS

Past forward: A two-time All-Star at

age 30, Martinez has more RBIs than Hall of Famer Carlton Fisk had at the same age. The 114 RBIs Martinez racked up in 2007 are the most by an Indians catcher.

### 46 Roy Oswalt, SP, ASTROS

Past forward: If he hits his average for wins in a season (16) this year, the pitcher with the third-best active winning percentage (.663) will overtake Joe Niekro as the pitcher with the most victories as an Astro.

### **JUST ONE QUESTION**

For Matt Stairs, Phillies outfielder and 17-year veteran:

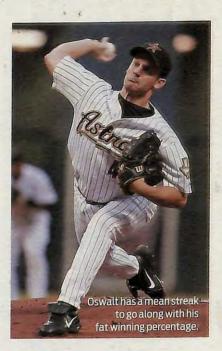
What makes Roy Oswalt a three-time All-Star?

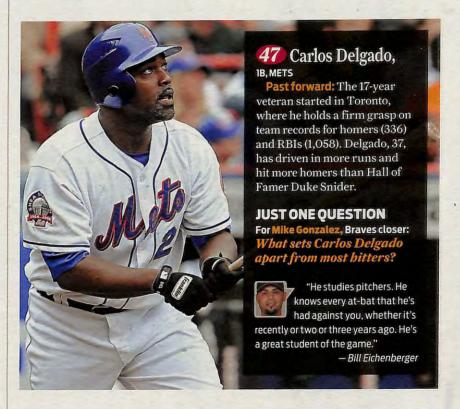


pitches."

"He's mean. He's not afraid to knock you down. His confidence on the mound is outstanding. Plus he throws 96 and can throw five or six different

- Bill Fichenberger







### (48) Carlos Zambrano, SP, CUBS

Past forward: The soon-to-be 28-year-old three-time All-Star has averaged 7.6 strikeouts per nine innings during his nine seasons with the Cubs. His .615 winning percentage is the same as Sandy Koufax's when he was 28.



### Cole Hamels, SP, PHILLIES

Past forward: Mr. Everything last postseason—Hamels was the NLCS and World Series MVP-sits atop the Phillies list of average strikeouts per nine innings (8.6), just ahead of Curt Schilling (8.4).

Past forward: During his first three full seasons in the majors, the threetime All-Star averaged 90.6 RBIs, more than Hall of Fame catcher Gary Carter (74.6) did in the same portion of his career.

.....

### **HEAD TO HEAD**

With Gary Carter, Hall of Fame catcher and 11-time All-Star Better catcher-the Twins' Joe Mauer or the Braves' Brian McCann?



"I would say Joe Mauer because he's won two batting titles. And I know what kind of a catch-and-

throw guy he is because I saw him in the Florida State League for a very short time. You can't take anything away from Brian McCann, either. He's a solid catcher and has done a great job for the Braves. But if I had to make a choice, I'd have to go with Joe Mauer."

- Bill Eichenberger



### JUST MISSED THE CUT ...

- Scott Kazmir, SP, Rays
- Nick Markakis, RF, Orioles
- Magglio Ordonez, RF, Tigers
- 54. Michael Young, 3B, Rangers
- Prince Fielder, 1B, Brewers

### ON THE HORIZON

Who's the best player 23 or younger? Four major league general managers weigh in:



Dave Dombrowski, Tigers, says ... Rays 3B Evan Longoria. "He's good offensively, defensively and seems to be a leader. He has power on offense and looks to be a Gold Glover."



Jack Zduriencik, Mariners, says ... Brewers SP Yovani Gallardo. "He will win 20 and be a No. 1 starter. He has poise, command and stuff."



Dayton Moore, Royals, says ... Rangers SS Elvis Andrus. "He's special. When I was in Atlanta, we signed him. I remember his workout. First round of batting practice: line drive after line drive to right field. He has the same approach today. Good makeup, great kid."



> Ruben Amaro Jr., Phillies, says ... San Diego State SP Stephen Strasburg. 'He's the real deal.'

- Stan McNeal

### A YEAR AWAY

These five guys didn't crack the top 50 this year, but they're locks for 2010:



Adrian Gonzalez, 1B, Padres. Only Phillies first baseman Ryan Howard has more home runs than

Gonzalez since the

start of the 2008

season.



Josh Johnson, SP, Marlins. Since returning from elbow surgery last July. Johnson is 10-1 with a 3.18 ERA in 22 starts.



Matt Kemp, CF, Dodgers. He has a solid combination of power, speed and defensive ability (N.L.-best 16 outfield assists in 2008).



Jonathan Papelbon, RP, Red Sox. Only Francisco Rodriguez and Trevor Hoffman have more saves than Papelbon since 2006.



Ryan Zimmerman, 3B, Nationals. He already has a 100-RBI season and a 30-game hitting streak on his resume.

- Chris Bahr

### **GIVE THESE GUYS SOME CREDIT**

Who is the most underrated player in the game today?



David Wright, 3B. Mets. says... Indians 3B/RF

Mark DeRosa. "He can play a number of different positions. He was an important piece of that (2008) Chicago Cubs team that kind of ran away with it. He has put up good numbers in Texas, Chicago and this year in Cleveland. He has not been appreciated enough for the versatility that he brings and being able to be a situational hitter."



Johnny Damon, LF. Yankees, says...

"The guy can flat-out mash. He plays good defense and just knows how to play the game. He's always been a pain in our butts. He is a very underrated player."

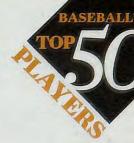
Blue Jays 2B Aaron Hill.



Gary Sheffield, OF, Mets, says ... Yankees

2B Robinson Cano. "He's not appreciated the way he should be. For a second baseman to handle the bat the way he does, he can hit 1 through 9 and you couldn't tell the difference in his approach. He still hits. Those players are few and far between. And when you find one, that's a special player."

Bill Eichenberger

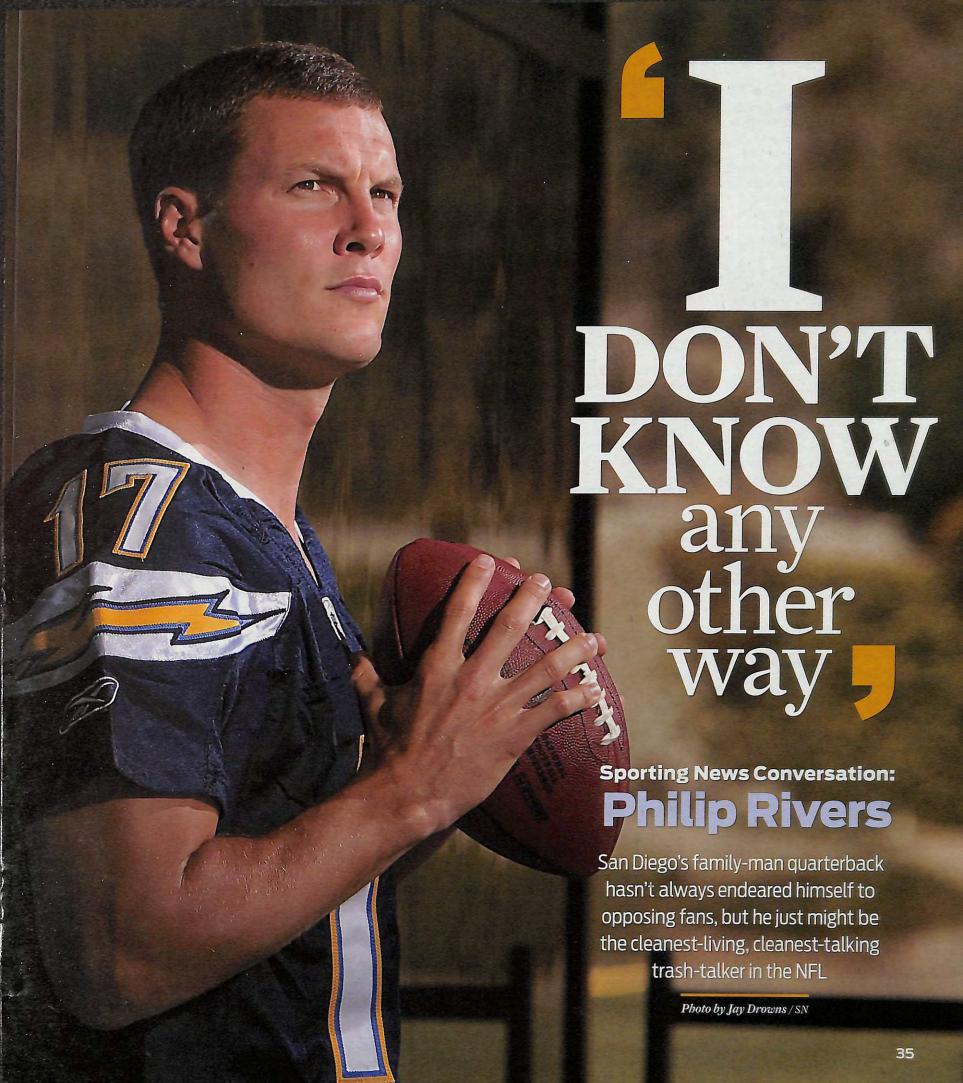




MY TOP 50 By SN baseball writer Stan McNeal

- Albert Pujols, Cardinals
- Joe Mauer, Twins
- Johan Santana, Mets
- Chase Utley, Phillies
- Alex Rodriguez, Yankees
- 6. Zack Greinke, Royals
- Hanley Ramirez, Marlins
- 8. Roy Halladay, Blue Jays
- David Wright, Mets Evan Longoria, Rays
- 11. Jose Reves, Mets
- 12. Ryan Howard, Phillies
- Manny Ramirez, Dodgers
- Mark Teixeira, Yankees
- Dustin Pedroia, Red Sox 15.
- Grady Sizemore, Indians
- 17. Derek Jeter, Yankees
- Kevin Youkilis, Red Sox
- Carlos Beltran, Mets
- Josh Hamilton, Rangers
- 21. CC Sabathia, Yankees
- Tim Lincecum, Giants
- 23. Cole Hamels, Phillies
- 24. Ryan Zimmerman, Nationals
- 25. Torii Hunter, Angels
- 26. Jason Bay, Red Sox
- 27. Justin Morneau, Twins
- 28. Ichiro Suzuki, Mariners
- 29. Adam Dunn, Nationals
- 30. lan Kinsler, Rangers
- Nick Markakis, Orioles
- 32. Derek Lowe, Braves
- 33. Joe Nathan, Twins
- Jonathan Papelbon, Red Sox Francisco Rodriguez, Mets
- Mariano Rivera, Yankees
- Adrian Gonzalez, Padres
- Lance Berkman, Astros
- Matt Holliday, A's
- Chipper Jones, Braves Aramis Ramirez, Cubs
- Alfonso Soriano, Cubs
- Vladimir Guerrero, Angels
- Miguel Cabrera, Tigers
- Jake Peavy, Padres
- 46. Ryan Braun, Brewers
- Jimmy Rollins, Phillies
- Cliff Lee, Indians
- Jermaine Dye, White Sox
- Yadier Molina, Cardinals

Contributing: Stan McNeal, Matt Crossman, Chris Bahr, Ken Bradley, James Boswell



here's a word for a guy like Philip Rivers. Cocky? Many NFL fans would say so, considering his yap-a-lot demeanor toward anyone-player and paying customer alike-wearing an opposing team's jersey. Annoying? The folks in Denver believe it, especially after the Chargers came from three games down in the AFC West with three games to go to overtake the Broncos in 2008. Driven? After Rivers played with a torn ACL in the '07 playoffs, then led the league with a 105.5 passer rating last season, it certainly fits.

But the best word to define Rivers? "Homebody," he says proudly. Rivers is an old soul of 27 who married at 19, has three daughters and a son and heads home-no, races there-at the end of every workday with the Chargers, the team he has quarterbacked for three seasons after sitting behind Drew Brees in '04 and '05. On an early-May Thursday in San Diego, after 90 minutes in the weight room in anticipation of what he hopes will be a Super Bowl season, Rivers sat for an interview with Sporting News' Steve Greenberg. Then he rushed to the players parking lot, jumped behind the wheel of his black Ford F-250 and made his way toward the destination that matters most to him.

SN: You say you're going to tone down talking to opposing fans. . Why would you do that? It seems like fun for both sides.

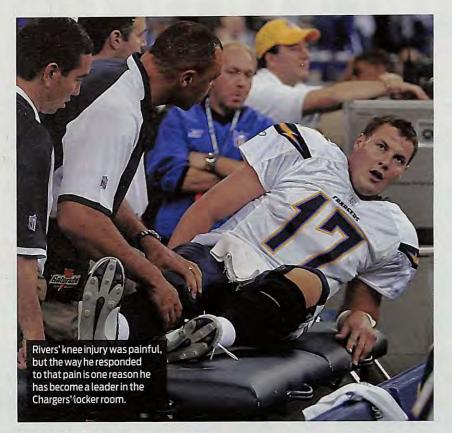
RIVERS: It is fun. There hasn't been profanity on either side; it hasn't been vulgar. In Indianapolis (in a January '08 playoff game), every completion Peyton (Manning) threw: "That's how a real quarterback does it!" And then we scored and I said, "Yeah, what now?" But the reasons for toning it down are, 1) so it's not a distraction for any of us, and then 2) it wasn't explained on the SportsCenter reel like I've explained it to you. People watched it and said, "This guy's out of his mind." Not that I always worry about the perception, but I'm not going win that battle by saying I'm just having a good time.

SN: You're not going to pipe down with opposing players, though, are you? That wouldn't be you.

RIVERS: It's not like I go into the game with a plan: What am I going think of today to say to these guys?

SN: You don't write messages on towels?

RIVERS: No! It's all within the game. You get a guy to bite up and throw a deep in over his head: "Quit bitin' the cheese now!" It's all things you'd say in the backyard that I've said to my brother: "We're gonna lay you out all



#### JUST ONE QUESTION



For Antonio Gates, Chargers Pro Bowl tight end: Sure. Philip Rivers is respected in the locker room, but does he truly fit in on a personal level?

"Man, he's definitely one of the most well-liked guys on the whole team. Normally, the great quarterbacks are the general type. But Philip has the demeanor of, like, a cornerback or a wide receiver-totally easygoing and hilarious. For example, I'm sitting there watching a Lakers-

Rockets playoff game and, out of nowhere, I get a text from Philip that says, 'I'm gonna get my hair cut like Ron Artest.' That was funny. But he's also the guy we follow out on to that field. When he played (in the 2007 playoffs) with a torn ACL, it was a big moment. It blew away the doubts anybody had about who is the leader of this team."

- Steve Greenberg

day!" "Y'all can't stop that play!" It's all fun. And, over time, you get to know these guys and you can't wait to play them. Jared Allen in Kansas City was always fun to play against, hearing him holler back and forth, "I'm gonna be on you all day!" He caught a touchdown against us and was hollering over at Antonio Gates, "Hey, how'd you like that? It was a pretty sweet catch, wasn't it?" If you can't have that, then we're kidding ourselves-because it's a game.

**SN:** Is it important to you that fans know you keep it clean?

RIVERS: It really is important. Being a family man, having four children, it is important that it's clean and that I can go home and tell the story to my wife or my mom. In high school, and for 51 games at N.C. State, I was the same guy and nothing really surfaced then. There just happens to be a camera at every angle now.

SN: One of those cameras caught you gesturing to Jay Cutler during a win against the Broncos a couple of seasons ago. It sure looked like you were taunting him. Did you go too far?

RIVERS: There are obviously two sides to every story. I've seen the clip over and over. They're a division rival, our guys got a big defensive stop, they'd been going at it all day with Jay, and I was kind of congratulating Matt Wilhelm and Shaun Phillips. I had a little smirk on my face, had a little, "Atta baby, nice play!" with my eyes directed toward Jay. Is it something I regret? No, because it was clean. But I understand some of the feedback and the perception it created. Maybe it wasn't the best thing. But I can repeat everything that was

said and how it went. If it doesn't get caught on TV, I don't think either one of us would have ever thought about it.

SN: But Cutler was offended. He later said he's "not a big fan" of yours and he doesn't like the way you carry yourself on the field.

RIVERS: I've been nothing but complimentary of Jay as a player and a quarterback. I think he's a great player. I would like to think we've got a great deal of respect for each other as players, as competitors. I think it's become a non-issue. It has fizzled out. But I will miss the two times a year against Jay (who was traded to the Bears in April) and the hype that it brought.

SN: How great was it for this team to hang in there last season and win the division the way you did?

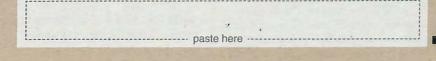
RIVERS: It was unreal. I remember us quarterbacks, me and Billy (Volek) and Charlie (Whitehurst), sitting there in between meetings and film doing probability on our chances for the playoffs. Treating it as if every game was 50-50, we were going, "All right, we have a 3.5 percent chance at this point," and it kept moving up; it went to 12 and then 25 and then, obviously, in the last game against Denver it was a 50-50 chance.

SN: You didn't have it more like 90-10 by then?

RIVERS: It was 50-50 on the board. but we said, "Shoot, it isn't 50-50."

SN: Did you know you were going to win that game? RIVERS: Oh, yeah, we did.

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### Philip Rivers

'I love being around the guys, but when the day is done Hike to be with Tiffany and the kids, playing and swimming and wrestling on the floor, watching some videos. The Chargers and football are part of our family, certainly, but family is definitely ahead."

JUST ONE QUESTION



For Jerricho Cotchery, Jets receiver and Rivers' No. 1 target at N.C.State In college, opposing

players and fans think Rivers was too cocky?

"Me and my wife laugh all the time about the stuff people say about Philip nowadays. We never heard anything like that at N.C. State. He was always a fiery guy, and he talked to other teams when we played-talked a lot of junk when we played Madden on the PlayStation, too-but I think everyone took it as this guy is just a huge competitor. If anything, he always seemed more mature than everybody else. He was a family man at a very young age, but the way he carried himself it didn't seem like he got married early at all."

Steve Greenberg

SN: Well, the Cutler stuff is over-you outlasted him in the AFC West. Can you rule the roost in the division for a while?

RIVERS: We hope so. The division has changed a lot this offseason, with new coaching staffs-which will mean new systems-and new players. Those teams were very active in the draft and free agency. You normally go into the season with six games where you pretty much know what they're running, you know the personnel, and those are the easiest games to prepare for. It's going to be different going into this season, but we certainly feel like we're the team everybody is chasing.

SN: Are the Chargers going to win the Super Bowl this season?

RIVERS: I don't even want to say yes because for two offseasons now there's been so much hype around this town and in the national media that this is the most talented team in football-the Chargers have got this and this and this-and then we've gone 1-3 and 0-2. We've been battle-tested, faced every situation we could face, had every type of adversity. You can kind of just sense now in our locker room, "Let's be quiet and go play and get it done."

**SN:** What are you expecting from LaDainian Tomlinson? Is it possible anymore, in this offense, for him to lead the league in rushing?

RIVERS: There's no question it is. He's looked awesome this offseason. And nobody really knows but him about what he was going through with

the injuries last year. He has looked as fresh and excited as he's been since I've been here. I don't see any reason why he can't win that thing.

SN: If you could play the rest of your career for Norv Turner, would you want that?

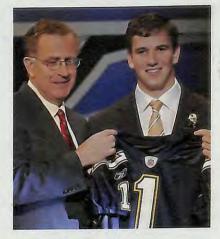
RIVERS: No question. There's a perception that he's so laid-back, he needs to be more fiery. He's as passionate and as excited and motivating and hardworking of a coach as I've seen. I don't know how much more you could ask for and what you could want. And he's a lot of fun to play for. I like to think that we're wired the same way. It's good when the head coach and the quarterback are on the same page. It sounds funny, but we both like football a lot.

SN: Here's an impossible question: If you were on a team with Eli Manning and Ben Roethlisberger, who would

RIVERS: That is pretty impossible. I imagine you'd get three "I woulds" if you asked all three guys that question. I think I'd have to say I would.

SN: It was quite a haul the Chargers got for Eli Manning not only you but draft picks that turned into Shawne Merriman and Nate Kaeding. How would you analyze that 2004 draft-day trade?

RIVERS: I like to think the Chargers got the best end of that deal. When you think about what Merriman has meant to this team, and Nate Kaeding's one of



Rivers says San Diego got the better end of the draft-day deal that sent Eli Manning from the Chargers to the Giants.

the top kickers in this league, we have greatly benefited from it.

SN: What has Manning been missing out on these past five years?

RIVERS: San Diego is a great place to live. I'm sure there are a lot more sunny days and it's a little warmer year-round, that's for sure. It worked out for both of us. Not knowing the type of team and camaraderie they have there-obviously, they won a championship-I'm excited that I was the one who got to be around these guys and this organization. It's amazing how much Southern California has become home.

SN: Somebody said of you, "When he leaves here, he leaves here." As in, it's family time. What does family mean to you?

RIVERS: It means everything. I love being around the guys, but when the day is done I like to be with Tiffany and the kids, playing and swimming and wrestling on the floor, watching some videos. The Chargers and football are part of our family, certainly, but family is definitely ahead. Tiffany is great. We met back when I was an eighth-grader and she was a seventh-grader. We go way back. She loves being a mom.

SN: A 27-year-old guy with a wife and four kids-that's some heavy-duty stuff.

RIVERS: I don't know any other way. Tiffany and I got married after my freshman season. I was 19. We had Halle 15 months after. I had a semester in the dorm, and that was all I needed.



#### **SN:** How did you know Tiffany was the one?

RIVERS: I knew she was special from early on. I remember seeing her at the baseball field and telling my mom, "You see that girl over there? She's a good girl." I kind of picked her out. And I guess from then on, I was kind of in pursuit.

SN: You are a devout Catholic who speaks out about his faith. That's kind of a rarity in the sports world, isn't it?

RIVERS: There are not a lot of us, and we need more of us. It's faith, family, football-in that order, I grew up in Alabama and was a little bit of a minority down there already. We went to Mass every Sunday. Tiffany wasn't Catholic growing up; she was a very strong Christian. It was important to us as we nurtured our relationship that, spiritually, we were on the same page. She actually converted before our wedding day. We're both very strong in the faith. We both say we're best friends, and that's where it starts. Raising our children in the faith now, it has

provided us many blessings and means a ton to us.

SN: Two highly controversial propositions related to family issues were on California ballots last year: Prop 8, which eliminated same-sex couples' right to marry in the state; and Prop 4, which would have required parental notification before abortions could be performed on minors. Did you get involved with those causes?

RIVERS: On Prop 8, I did not, but I have the stance that you would imagine. As for Prop 4, just having young daughters, I felt strongly enough about it to try to help out. Another thing I feel strongly about is chastity. You ask why I got married so young—it was important to Tiff and I to remain pure until we got married. That was certainly some motivation right there to get married young. (Laughs.)



# You don't know [Philip Rivers] like I know [Philip Rivers]

By Jake Peavy, San Diego Padres ace and 2007 Cy Young award winner

In 2004, right after the NFL draft, Drew Brees came to a Padres game and took batting practice. Being an Alabama native, I was all excited that the Chargers had gotten Philip, a quarterback from the state. We Southern guys are proud of our heritage and all. Drew was hitting in my group. After we finished, I said, "Hey Drew, if you see Philip Rivers, tell him I'm pulling for him." He said, "I'm not telling him that. You tell him that." He was kind of ticked off. I looked at Trevor Hoffman and said, "Did I just upset him?" He said, "Man, Philip Rivers is trying to take his job."

Philip and I do lots of things together. We go to dinner with our wives. We like to be in the outdoors a lot. We also belong to the same golf club. We were up there this winter, playing tennis on the courts at the club we belong to; Katie and my children and Tiffany and his kids were our audience. It was a moment when I really appreciated our friendship. They come down to Petco Park to watch me pitch, and I take my boys to Chargers games to let them watch their favorite football player. It's awesome.

It varies depending where we go, but he's usually the more recognizable face around San Diego. It's funny, though: When we go out, we kind of talk the same, with the same accent. He's the quarterback; I'm the pitcher. People are like, "Are you two related or something?"

The biggest things I admire about Philip are how passionate he is about football and how much he cares about his teammates. I've never met a guy that wants to win like he does. What he went through in the (2007) playoffs with his knee, that's as gutsy of a performance as you'll ever see. I know he's gotten some pipe for mouthing off to fans, but if you know him, you know he wouldn't say a cross word or hurt a mouse.

- As told to Steve Greenberg



#### JUST ONE QUESTION



For Rex Ryan, Jets coach: What makes Rivers difficult to match up against?

"He's got everything you

look for-the arm strength, the poise. The thing I like most about him is the competitiveness and the leadership he has. You see it-those players will jump on a sword for him. He's that kind of guy. He probably doesn't ever think he's lost a game in his life. Time just ran out on him."

- Clifton Brown

'Maybe because I see a similarity in style-toughness, grittiness, hating to lose, enjoying the game—I've always wanted to play like Brett Favre.'

SN: Have you struggled at times to be yourself in the jock culture, where there's a lot of sex outside of marriage?

RIVERS: Temptations are there in every profession, wherever you are, whatever you do. Me? No, I haven't struggled. I credit that to my strong faith and commitment to not put myself in tempting situations.

SN: Do you talk to teammates about their sex lives?

RIVERS: I certainly am open to it, but I try just to live by example. I certainly stand up for what I believe with anything that may come up that I feel convicted and strong about, but I try not to be pushy or force things upon guys.

SN: Back to football—who's the best quarterback who ever lived? And who's your all-time favorite?

RIVERS: Right when you first asked the first question, two guys popped into my mind: Joe Montana and Dan Marino. I had a poster wall of quarterbacks, and Marino, Montana, Brett Favre, John Elway, Troy Aikman, those guys were all on the wall. I wasn't a "That's my guy!" type of fan; I was just a fan of quarterbacks. I couldn't wait to watch a game and see guys play. Maybe because I see a similarity in style-toughness, grittiness, hating to lose, enjoying the game-I've always wanted to play like Brett Favre. And then Peyton Manning has always been a favorite. Playing against a Peyton Manning-led team-the way he plays the game and goes about it and respects it-it's always meant a little more.



SN: Who do you see as the best quarterbacks in the game, and where do you fit in the pecking order?

RIVERS: The first two guys that come to mind are always (Tom) Brady and

#### SN: In that order?

RIVERS: Not necessarily. In fact, Peyton probably would be the first guy if you asked me who I'm taking today for one game. You know, these questions are hard for me because I always try to be humble as possible. But, as a competitor, I want to be confident in myself. If somebody actually did ask me who I'm taking today to play one game, I'd say I want to be the guy. So I say Peyton, eliminating myself. I may be the only guy who thinks that, and that's fine. I feel like if I can continue to get better, I can be right up there in the mix with all those guys.

#### 3-on-3: Former star QBs rate the class of 2004







**Philip Rivers** 

Ben Roethlisberger

The first three quarterbacks selected in the 2004 draft—the Giants' Eli Manning, Philip Rivers and the Steelers' Ben Roethlisberger—always will be judged against one another. SN asked two Hall of Fame QBs and a former league MVP to rank the trio:

#### **DAN FOUTS** 6 Pro Bowls, Hall of Famer

- 1. Roethlisberger
- 2. Manning
- 3. Rivers



Fouts says: guess you have to go by Super Bowls:

Roethlisberger has two, Manning has one and Philip has none. But a quarterback can only do so much-I guess I'm defending myself hereand there's no question in my mind Philip can win one with this Chargers group. He has the tools to move up this list. He probably wears his emotion too far out on his sleeve sometimes, but I really like his fire."

#### WARREN MOON 9 Pro Bowls, Hall of Famer

- 1. Rivers
- 2. Roethlisberger
- 3. Manning



Moon says: Roethlisberger is the best playmaker

of the three, but if I were building a team, I'd go with Rivers-he's the purest passer. I really love his quick release. He reminds me a lot of Dan Marino with his personality: He's a real fiery guy who likes to get after people. He even played with a torn ligament in his knee and showed a lot of toughness. I think he is on the brink of greatness."

#### **RICH GANNON** 4 Pro Bowls, 2002 NFL MVP

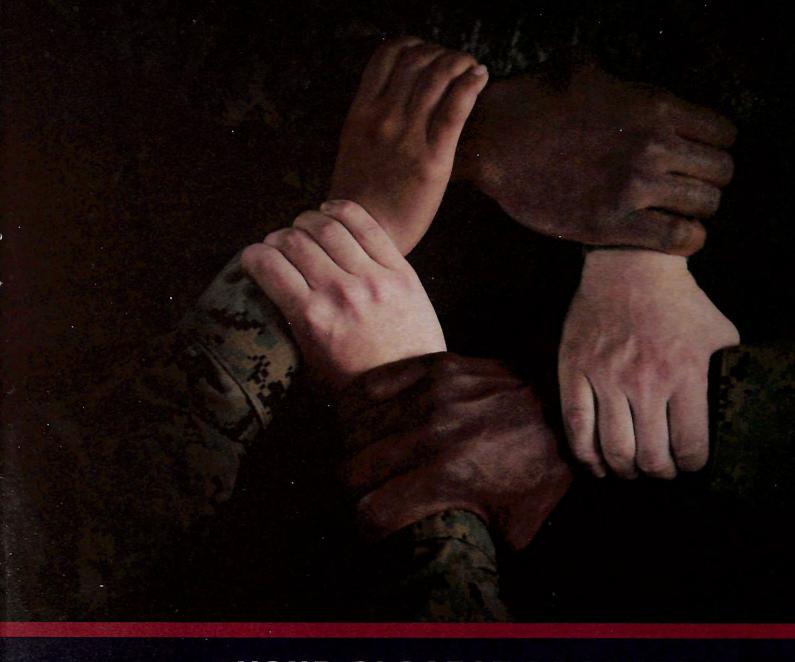
- 1. Roethlisberger
- 2. Manning
- 3. Rivers



Gannon says: "Two Super Bowl wins, a great

competitor, very strong, good feet, difficult to sack-I've got to go with Roethlisberger. It was very close between Manning and Rivers, but I gave the nod to Manning because of his Super Bowl win. Rivers has more potential but also has an attitude that has been a problem for some teammates and coaches. But he's very accurate and confident and will play through pain."

- Steve Greenberg, Dennis Dillon



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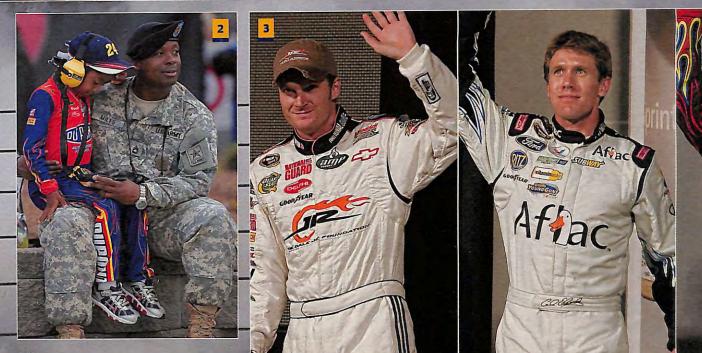


# STARS SMOKE



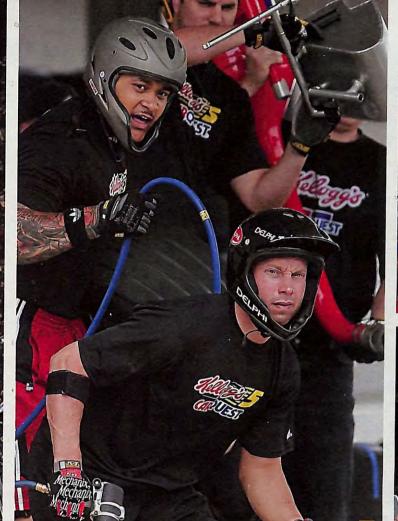
NASCAR's All-Star weekend brought the best in the sport together for a little racing—and more than a little eye-popping fun

Photos by Bob Leverone/ SN

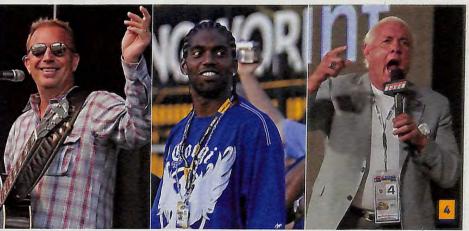


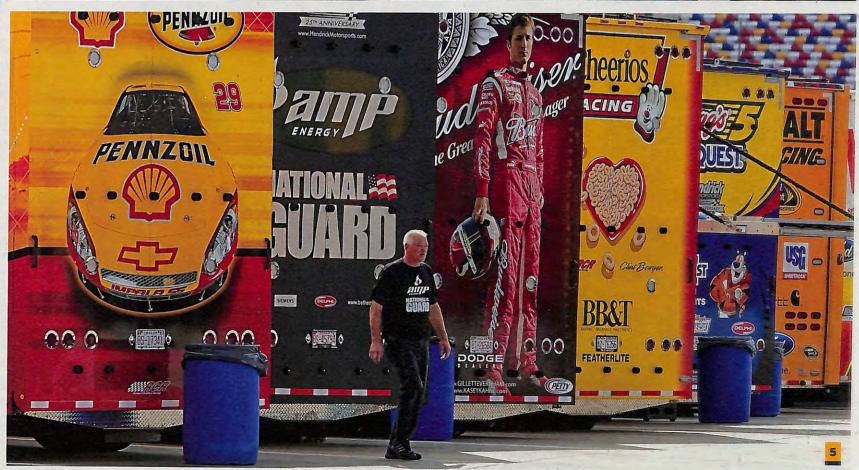
#### Kevin Harvick's nickname is Happy, and he was indeed after winning the Pennzoil Victory Challenge burnout competition at Lowe's Motor Speedway. The event is exactly what it sounds like: Drivers get in the car and smoke the tires in whatever way they want for 30 seconds. Harvick kept his No. 29 car mostly in the same place-so it was less doughnut and more eclair. All-Star weekend festivities kicked off with a party in downtown Charlotte. Revelers were treated to race-themed events and plenty of music. Joe Miles and his son, Alex, 6, traveled from Augusta, Ga., to attend the NASCAR Sprint All-Star Race, which culminated four days of events. Alex watched the race on a FanView, a handheld device that gives fans access to the TV telecast, in-car cameras and radio communications between teams. Dollars to doughnuts, or perhaps eclairs, he's checking out Jeff Gordon. Just a hunch. Don't want to say the All-Star Race's format is confusing ... but three-time Sprint Series Cup champion Jimmie Johnson must have asked 27 times during the race how the four segments worked. The point is, even the All-Star part is confusing. From left: Dale Earnhardt Jr., Carl Edwards, Jeff Gordon and 15 other drivers were invited to compete because they either won a points race in 2008 or '09-or won a previous All-Star race; Sam Hornish and Jamie McMurray got in by finishing 1-2 in the Sprint Showdown, a "race-in" event; B and Joey Logano was voted in by fans. Total drivers: 21, all of whom got a chance to wave during introductions before the event. Total in a regular race: 43. 43



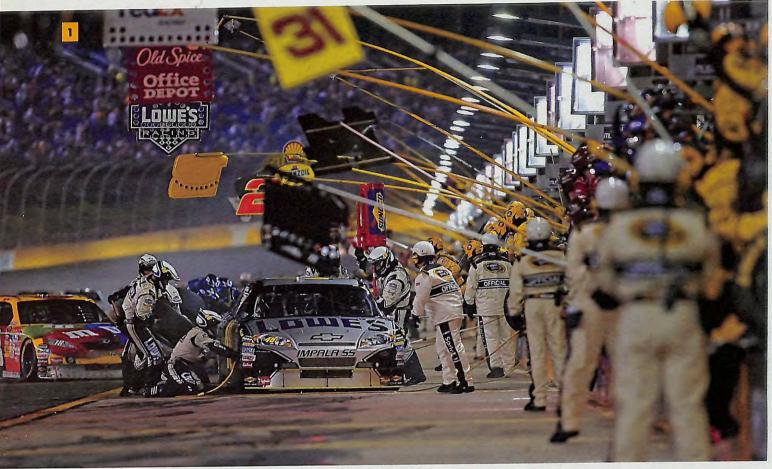














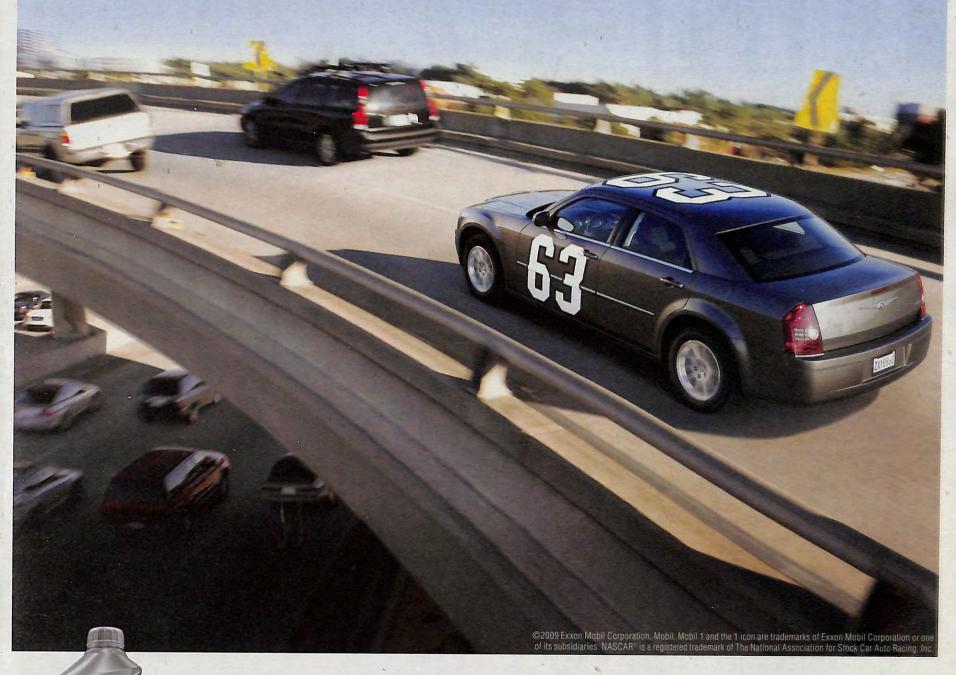




- Jimmie Johnson won the pole for the All-Star Race and led the first 50 laps before dropping back. Lowe's Motor Speedway is sponsored by the same company that sponsors Johnson's car, which is one reason for his success year in and year out at the track. No, it's not because he has secretinformation, it's because it's a very, very good career move to do well at a track that has the same name as the one that appears on the hood of your car. Bosses notice those things.
- 2 Kyle Busch made the move of the night, if not the year, during the 10-lap shootout to decide the winner of the All-Star Race. He had earlier tried passing on the right on a restart, between Matt Kenseth and the wall. Kenseth blocked that the next time, and the move would have been against the rules, anyway, so Busch went up the middle, splitting Jeff Gordon and Kenseth and taking the lead. Nobody else in the sport would try that move, much less pull it off.
- Tony Stewart (14) took the lead from Kenseth with two laps to go, going low to pass the No. 17. Says Stewart of his million-dollar pass: "I can't believe he gave me the bottom."
- Stewart-Haas Racing is the story of the year, easy. Many in the sport thought Stewart would flop as an owner, but he has excelled. His win in the All-Star Race was his first in NASCAR as an owner, as well as the first for Gene Haas, who was attending his first race since serving a term in federal prison for tax fraud. Told you it was the story of the year.



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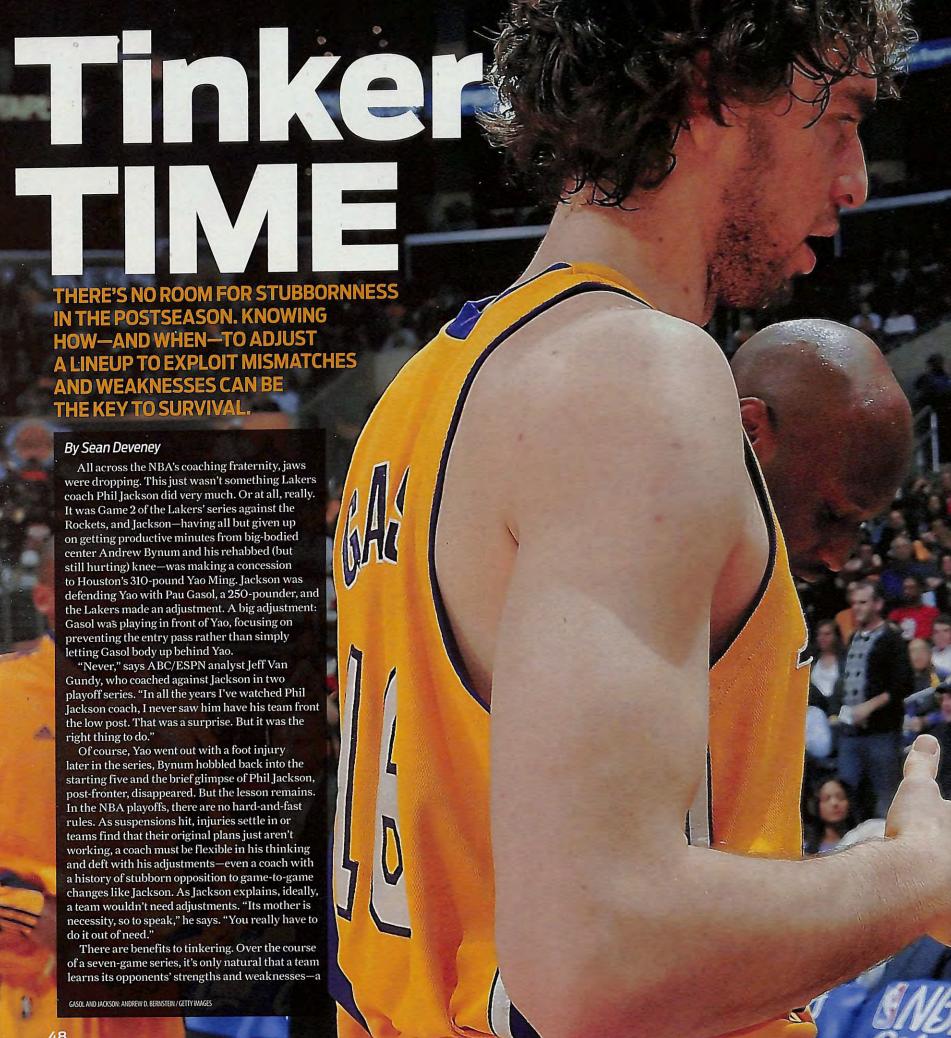


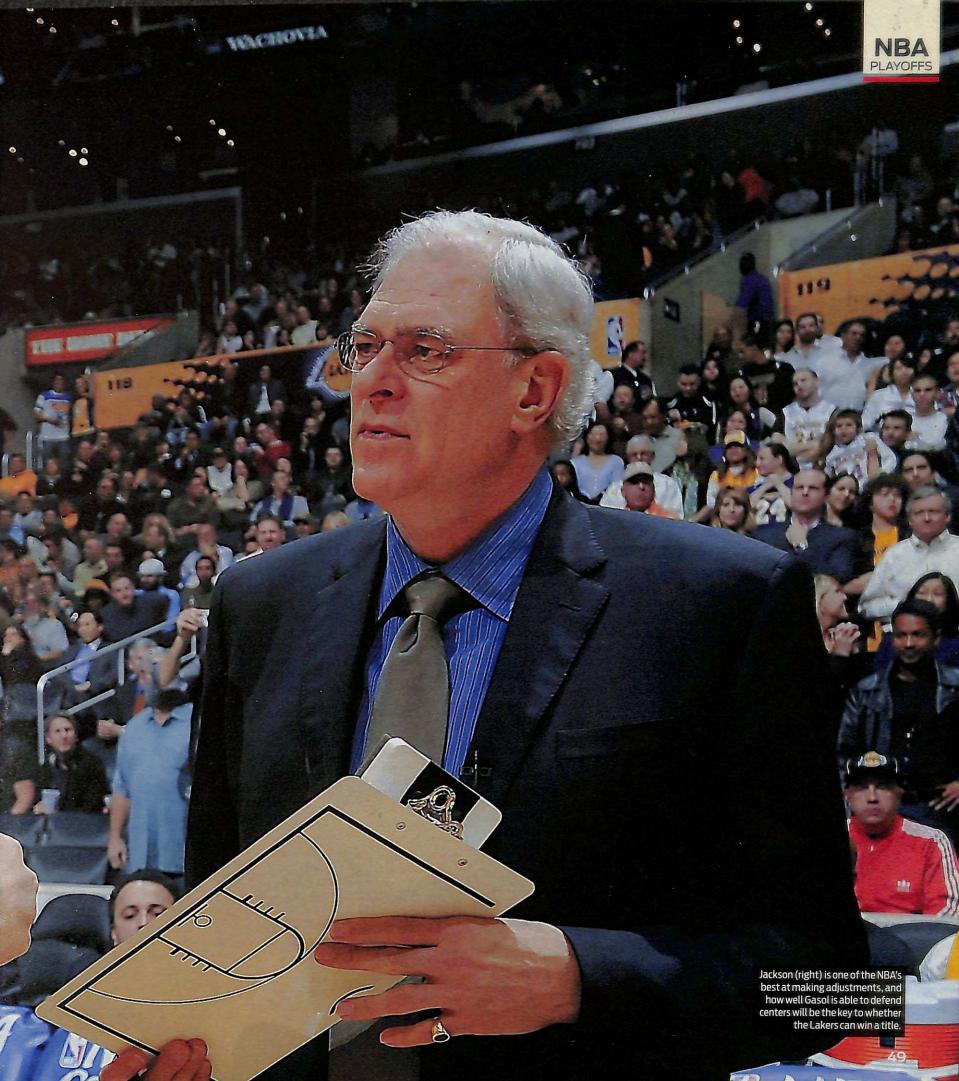
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a fast break, a locked-in star player, an unexpected injury. When that happens, players look to their coaches to find advantages. "We're lucky we have the coach we do," Rockets forward Shane Battier says of his coach, Rick Adelman. "He has been at this for 18 years. There isn't an offense he hasn't seen, there is no defensive set out there that is going to surprise him. It's a comfort for players. We have the ultimate faith that the coaching staff will make the right adjustments."

There is a danger, though. By the time a team gets to late May, it has already played 82 games together, plus another dozen or so playoff games. Identities have been established, and coaches must resist the temptation to over-adjust.

"The bottom line is you do what you do," says Celtics coach Doc Rivers, whose team never could fully adjust to life without injured superstar Kevin Garnett before it was eliminated by the Magic in the Eastern Conference semifinals. "We make adjustments, there's no doubt about that. ... You make certain changes, but you're not going to change the identity of the teams. They're going to be who they are, we're going to be who we are, and you just try to do it better each game."

Still, throughout this postseason, entire series have been decided by adjustments, and some are worth a closer look-because the two conference finals and eventually The Finals will be influenced not only by the talent on the floor but by adjustments made and not made by coaches.

#### THE PROBLEM:

Slowing down a (very) fast break > The original plan: The Nuggets have a different kind of fast break, one in which all five starters-plus all four of their primary bench options-run the floor. Guards Chauncey Billups and J.R. Smith have the green light to pull up for fast-break 3-pointers early in the shot clock, a threat that creates lanes

for dunking big men Nene, Kenyon Martin and Chris Andersen.

At the start of their second-round series with Denver, the Mavericks played their usual rotation. But it quickly became clear that Dallas was not athletic enough to keep up, as Denver outscored the Mavs in fast-break points, 54-13, in the first two games. "They want to run all the time," TNT analyst and former NBA coach P.J. Carlesimo says. "This team doesn't just run on turnovers but on blocked shots."

> The adjustment: Match their speed. "We're playing fast and early, and I don't know what they can do in those



situations," Denver coach George Karl says. "It's why fast and early works. You can't set up your defense, you can't set up a double-team, you can't set up a zone when you play in the first 10 seconds of the shot clock."

But you can try to match the pace. Dallas coach Rick Carlisle began playing young, athletic big man Brandon Bass more (his minutes increased each of the series' next three games), hoping Bass would cut off the fast-break production of Martin and

> The result: It helped. Playing an athletic big man against the Nuggets kept Nene and Martin from running with impunity and limited their scoring. The more Bass played, the more the Mavericks were able to close the fast-break gap. In Game 4, Denver still had the edge in fast-break points, but the differential was just 20-19.

> The significance: If the Nuggets are to be beaten, there are two choices: Run with them or slow them down. Running with them, though, requires just the right personnel.

> Free advice: "Playing defense against a fast break like that starts with your offense," former NBA coach Eric Musselman says. "Take care of the ball and make sure your shot is the one you want. Long rebounds and turnovers lead to breaks. When the shot goes up, you need to have three guys turning and running back on defense to cut off the transition. And you can slow the ball by jamming rebounders. If a defensive player gets the rebound, the closest player to him should jam his body into the rebounder. Just for a second or two, to prevent the outlet pass. It gives your defense an extra couple of seconds to get back."

#### THE PROBLEM:

Stopping the league's most unstoppable player

> The original plan: Old-fashioned, straight-up, one-on-one defense. That was the idea for Hawks coach Mike Woodson, who faced a pickyour-poison decision in Round 2play league MVP LeBron James with a single defender and guard the Cavaliers' other players, or attack him with double- and triple-teams, leaving Cleveland's supporting cast with open looks. He chose single coverage, which worked against Heat star Dwyane Wade in the first round.

"LeBron is going to have his way in terms of scoring points, but we have to cut off some of these other guys," Woodson says. "There is not a whole lot that you can do. Everybody says, 'Double him.' ... You talk about trying to get it out of his hands, but you've got to do that three-quarter court, and that really exposes the defense if you do that."

- > The adjustment: Throw more bodies at James. It took only 24 minutes for him to show that oneon-one doesn't work, as he put up 22 points in the first half of the opener. From there, Woodson tried just about every maneuver in the coaching playbook-switching on pick-and-rolls, trapping James to get him to pass, setting up a "picket fence" defense in the lane (which presents offensive players with a staggered gantlet of defenders).
- The result: Nothing worked. James ran a clinic on picking apart double-teams. And when the Hawks



went back to single coverage, he had little trouble scoring.

- > The significance: During consecutive sweeps, James and the Cavs were a problem that could not be solved in the first two rounds-and could be tough to solve through the middle of June.
- > Free advice: "I think you have to trap (James) and get the ball out of his hands," former coach and TNT analyst Mike Fratello says. "Otherwise, it's a free range out there, and he can assault you in a number of different ways. Mike Brown and the coaches do an excellent job of putting him in positions where the defense has difficult decisions. They get the ball to him up high, and if you double him, you have to do a lot of scrambling to get backyou have to have just the right rotations. But that's the best option. Get the ball out of his hands, hope that the shooters are off and that he is having a mortal night-you know, only 24, 25 points."

#### THE PROBLEM:

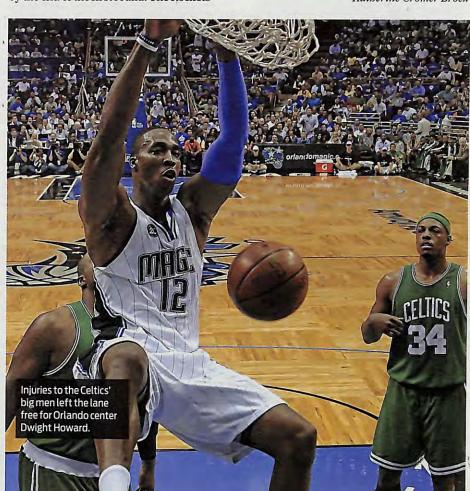
#### A big need to go small

- > The original plan: The Celtics figured they were entering the playoffs with hope of seeing Garnett again, and, at least, with Leon Powe coming off the bench. The Lakers thought they'd have a brandspankin'-new version of Bynum. The Rockets were counting on a center combo of Yao and Dikembe Mutombo.
- > The adjustment: In Boston, Garnett never returned and Powe was lost for the season by the end of the first round. The Rockets

lost Yao and Mutombo, and Bynum's knee is still causing problems for L.A. In a matter of days, three teams that planned to rely heavily on their big men were scrambling to assemble smaller lineups. The Lakers put more of an emphasis on using Gasol at center. The Rockets went with bruiser Chuck Hayes and spread the offense to the perimeter. The Celtics started replacing power forward Glen Davis with Brian Scalabrine after Davis' first foul-no matter when it occurred-to keep Big Baby out of foul trouble.

- > The result: A lot of organized chaos but teams that responded surprisingly well to adversity. "One thing a smaller lineup does is spread the floor," Lakers guard Kobe Bryant says. "If you're not ready for that, it can be dangerous."
- > The significance: The loss of big men will make small, makeshift lineups all the more important the rest of the postseason.
- > Free advice: "You have to make sure your smaller guys have the strength and athleticism to front the post and play three-quarters and that your guards can shoot," Van Gundy says. "If you're playing without one of your big guys, the other team is going to just up its big man and just back you down. Whoever is guarding him has to be able to play in front of him to prevent the entry pass, and you need guards who can step in on the baseline and try to strip the ball. It can be done, but it's harder than big vs. big.'

- Contributing: Albert Breer, Katherine Cromer Brock



#### WHEN COACHES CRY FOUL, IT WORKS

76ers coach Tony DiLeo got it started, and almost immediately, Magic coach Stan Van Gundy called him on it. In the first round of the playoffs, DiLeo, speaking during his postgame press conference, harped on the fact Orlando center Dwight Howard rarely gets whistled for 3-second violations. Van Gundy delivered this impromptu rebuke: "Is that what it's about now? We're supposed to lobby for the calls we want the next game? Let's just play the games."

Such innocence! Van Gundy should know by now that the coach's press conference has become part of the game, a tool coaches use to influence referees. This hardly started with DiLeo-it has been going on for years now. And judging by this postseason, it works.

- > Rockets coach Rick Adelman, after Houston lost Game 2 of its first-round series against the Trail Blazers: "They literally put their hands on (Yao Ming) from outside the free throw line all the way down." RESULT: Portland centers Greg Oden and Joel Przybilla were called for 18 fouls in the next two games.
- > Blazers coach Nate McMillan, acknowledging that Adelman's complaint had influenced the referees: "Greg and Joel are getting called for touch fouls against Yao. ... I'm just saying that it needs to be called both ways." RESULT: Oden and Przybilla were whistled for only six fouls in Game 5.
- > Celtics coach Doc Rivers, after Kendrick Perkins fouled out in Game 4 of the first round against the Bulls: "I've gotta say this about Perk—clearly, every game he's been targeted for these moving screens." **RESULT:** Perkins was called for zero fouls in 48 minutes in Game 5.
- ➤ Mavericks coach Rick Carlisle, upset that Dirk Nowitzki took only four free throws in Game I against the Nuggets in the second round: "He's being played very physically, away from the floor where the rules are different than in post play." RESULT: Nowitzki attempted an average of 15 free throws over the next three games.

- Sean Deveney

#### **COACHING IS REQUIRED—** EVEN WHEN YOU HAVE KOBE OR M.J.

Rockets guard Aaron Brooks, shrugged and said, "Let's see." He was trying to remember the first time his coach, Rick Adelman, faced off against Lakers coach Phil Jackson in the playoffs. Answer: the 1992 Finals. "I was 7," Brooks said. "So, I don't really remember that."

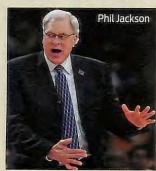
But Adelman does. Over the course of 18 years, he has faced Jackson five times in the postseason, a level of familiarity that makes the adjustment chess match more difficult.

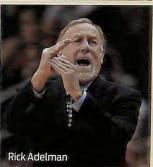
"The thing that Phil does is he identifies people who can play in his system, people he likes. That makes him a little harder to plan for because his teams usually have unique aspects. He likes big guards, he likes weakside rebounders. He knows how to find those people, and he likes to have interchangeable parts. He's very organized.

"He usually has somebody down the stretch that you're going to be really worried about-Michael Jordan, now Kobe Bryant. They always have the ball in the fourth quarter in certain spots. Even if you know where he wants to shoot, they can still get him to that spot. That's tough to guard, too.

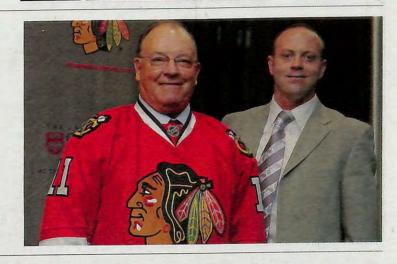
"I give him a lot of credit. Sometimes, people overlook the fact that, even if you have a talented team like some of the teams he's had, you still have to get them to buy in, and that's not always easy. But he's been able to do that."

- Sean Deveney





# FAIT SOIN PROJECT





# BOWMANS: COURTESY CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS; CELEBRATION: NAM Y HUH / AP; BOWMAN (PORTRAT): M. SPENCER GREEN / AP; BOWMAN: TOM PIDGEON / AP

# Blackhawks assistant G.M. Stan Bowman is proving there's nothing wrong with getting a little help from Dad in the chase for a Stanley Cup—especially when Dad is hockey legend Scotty Bowman

By Craig Custance

he portrait is from 1976. Three-yearold Stan Bowman is sitting inside the Stanley Cup, surrounded by family. Being the son of Scotty Bowman, the best hockey coach who ever lived, means the Cup is a constant in your life, especially when you're named after it.

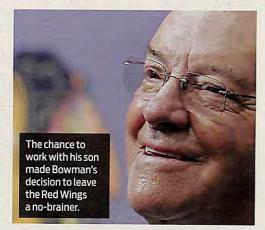
, Stan Bowman has that framed picture hanging on his office wall in the United Center, where he's an assistant general manager for the Blackhawks.

But it's just one of many taken through the years showing Stan and Scotty with hockey's crown jewel. Scotty Bowman has won 11 Cups, nine as a head coach—which is all fine and good for Scotty.

"But I've never been a part of it," Stan says, sitting behind his desk. "I'm aware that it may never happen."

He's closer now than he has ever been with Chicago's run to the NHL's final four and a third-round battle against his dad's old team, the Detroit Red Wings. But if there's anybody who can maintain perspective on the success Chicago is having right now, it's Stan.

At age 35, he has fought and beat Hodgkin's lymphoma twice. He has been in remission for nearly a year now and is fresh off some good news at his four-month checkup. So if he has a little more appreciation for these playoff moments, it's understandable. Especially because he gets to share them with his dad.



#### A lifetime deal ... kind of

Nearly a year ago, Chicago's front office personnel gathered for a brainstorming session. The young Blackhawks had given their fans a taste of the future, falling just short of making the playoffs. With owner Rocky Wirtz willing to approve anything that would help bring home a championship and new team president John McDonough demanding that kind of success, general manager Dale Tallon called a meeting.

Tallon's management style is simple: He understands that he doesn't know everything, and that the more talent he can surround himself with, the better his chances of winning a title.

He wanted to hire another executive to add to a front office that already included Stan Bowman and assistant G.M. Rick Dudley. Names were thrown around, but Stan's suggestion ended the debate.

"I don't know if this would work for you guys," he remembers saying. "But I always wanted to work with my dad."

As long as he could remember, Stan had been observing his dad at work. He'd listen to phone chatter with scouts, general managers and coaches—any of the constant conversations the most connected man in hockey holds each day.

He'd follow his dad around locker rooms, trying to absorb as much as he could. When he finally got a job in hockey, as he always hoped he would, the conversations with his dad were numerous.

But specifics? They couldn't do that.

Stan worked for the Blackhawks, Scotty for the rival Red Wings.

The summer meeting in Chicago presented an opportunity for father and son to work together. Hiding nothing. Sharing everything.

"Do you think he would even consider it?" Tallon wondered.

Scotty Bowman had a pretty good deal with the Red Wings. When he was brought in to coach in 1993, Detroit was a good team that couldn't win it all. Red Wings senior vice president Jim Devellano knew Scotty well from their days together in the St. Louis Blues organization decades earlier. Back in 1967, Devellano was a 24-year-old scout and Scotty was a 34-year-old coach.



Bowman has won a staggering 11 Stanley Cups—including three as the coach of the Red Wings.

In '93, Devellano targeted Bowman as the coach who could elevate the Red Wings to greatness.

"We need you for two years," Devellano told Bowman at the time. "We think we've got a pretty good team here."

At most, Devellano thought the relationship would last three years. But three became four. Four became five. Each summer, Bowman signed a new one-year contract.

By the time he retired as Red Wings coach in 2002, he had brought the organization three Stanley Cups. His success earned him a lifetime contract with the Red Wings, where everyone thought he'd wind down his career as a consultant to Detroit G.M. Ken Holland, an arrangement that allowed him to scout games from his home in Tampa. It was a sweet deal.

But Devellano got a phone call last summer that he says shocked him.

"Jimmy," Bowman told him, "I love the Red Wings. I love Detroit. However, I've had a request from my son wanting me to join him in Chicago."

Scotty's lifetime deal with the Red Wings ended—at age 74.

# WMAN: PAUL SANCYA / AP, CRAWFORD: JASON WISE / GETTY IMAGES

#### Happy together

Stan's wife, Sue, remembers her husband struggling with how to express his desire to work together in Chicago with his dad. He didn't want to pressure his father, but at the same time he wanted him to know how much it would mean to him.

"You kind of have to tell him something," Sue says. "Don't beg him or anything. Tell him what you're thinking."

Stan knew his dad would do anything for his family. As a teenager, he saw it, even if he didn't understand it.

The family lived in Buffalo and didn't move even when Scotty was coaching in Pittsburgh. With his kids in school, Scotty had no intention of uprooting his family to follow him around the NHL.

So he commuted. He'd lead practice in Pittsburgh in the morning and drive nearly four hours to Buffalo for dinner. After spending a couple hours with his family, he drove back. The kids told him he didn't have to do it. But he did anyway.

"You have to make sacrifices. At the time you're doing it, you don't think about it," Scotty says. "Some things have to be done."

That's why, when Scotty spent so much time in Chicago while Stan was recovering from cancer last year, Stan wasn't surprised. It's what his dad does. Even if it doesn't match the public persona of the gruff, intimidating, Stanley Cup-winning coach.

There are few with the Blackhawks who even know that intimidating side of Bowman.

Chicago's star forward, Patrick Kane, lived with Stan Bowman last year and loved hanging out and watching hockey with Stan, Stan's two boys, Camden and William, and Scotty, a frequent visitor.

Scotty played hockey in the basement with the boys and tended to the ice rink that filled the entire back yard. Every two hours, he added just the right amount of water.

The legendary leader who used fear to reach his players? "I've never seen him like that," Kane says. "I've seen him as a nice, gentle guy. He has cool things to say. He's a funny guy overall."

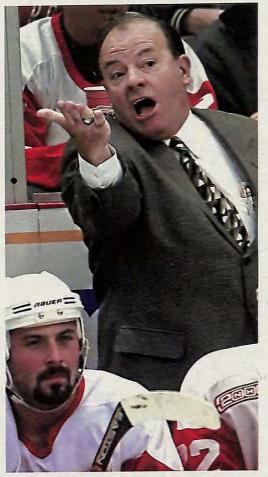
A funny guy? This is the same person who could go an entire season and not say two words to one of his players. The same person who would drive opposing coaches crazy by painting the locker room right before the game or by cutting the visiting bench just a little shorter than it should be.

Sergei Fedorov laughs at Kane's description of Bowman. A funny guy? Fedorov played for Bowman in Detroit, and his perception of Bowman is a little different.

"He's funny for them now, until he becomes the coach. It's a little different," Fedorov says, smiling.

But even Fedorov saw glimpses of the other side of Scotty Bowman. Scotty once gave him all the time he needed to deal with a personal issue. Even helped him out. For the first time, Fedorov saw somebody different.

"A really nice, nice guy," Fedorov says. That is, until he returned to the ice. "Then—that was it."



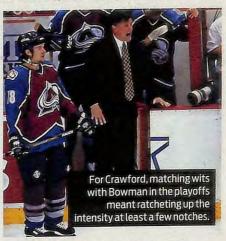
This was as close to a smile as the hard-nosed Bowman ever flashed while behind the bench.

Tve never seen him (angry). I've seen him as a nice, gentle guy. He has cool things to say. He's a funny guy overall.'

-Patrick Kane, Blackhawks forward

#### What's it like to face Scotty Bowman?

By Marc Crawford, 1996 Stanley Cup-winning coach with Colorado



You always had to be on top of your game whenever you coached against Scotty. He had great teams, and he always would find a way to mix things up, to keep you guessing as to what was happening. He wasn't afraid to juggle his lines, and he was very difficult to match against.

I don't think he gets enough credit for how technically sound he was as a coach. He'd make constant adjustments in a series. Changing lines is one thing; his greatest strength was handling individuals.

I respected the fact that Scotty was the only coach to have five or six generations of players. He goes all the way back to the Canadiens organization that won four in a row. He's a guy who coached Dickie Moore and Doug Harvey but also Pavel Datsyuk. It's pretty amazing to think about.

He's got so many great contacts in the league, and he continues to have them. He probably doesn't have them on speed dial; he has them stored in his head. He is the king of kings. I remember the big series (the 1996 Western Conference finals), the most memorable for me, the one we won with Colorado. I discovered he was a master at deflecting attention from what he wanted it deflected from.

I like the fact that he was smart about working with Red Wings G.M. Kenny Holland about getting the right people in Detroit. He liked Russians, liked them playing together and knew they needed to be together. The whole Russian Five, that was Scotty.

When we had that big argument on the bench in the 1997 playoffs, it was not one of my finer moments. My kids always look at that on YouTube and say, "You are really nuts." I'm slightly embarrassed by some of the stuff that happened. At the same time, Scotty recognizes it is the competitive flow of the game. It wasn't funny then, but we can laugh about it now. We've had a chance to talk a number of times, and I find Scotty to be a very giving guy, a very interesting guy. But he was really hard to match wits with.

-As told to Craig Custance

#### Everybody's mentor

Through an e-mail to his dad, Sue says, Stan shared his thoughts about working together in Chicago.

There were a lot of factors. It was an opportunity to build something together, and surely the cancer scare factored into the equation. "You start to realize that there is more to life than the details," Stan says. "There is, kind of, a big picture."

It was a no-brainer. For Scotty, it was a chance to build something with his son and a chance to help transform another Original Six hockey team into a champion.

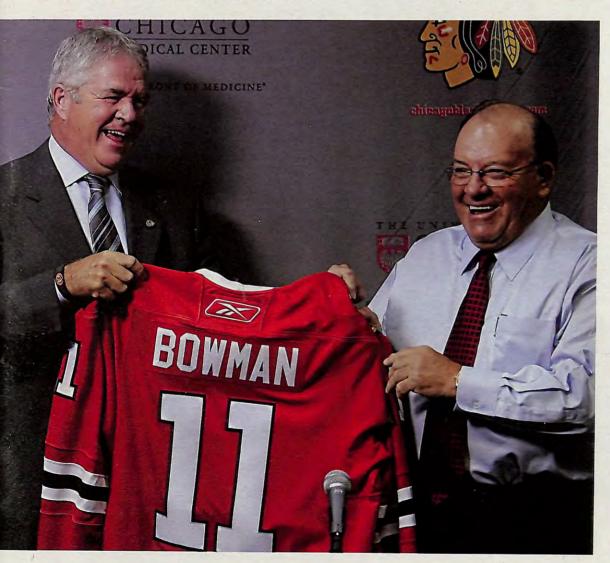
His new job description as a senior advisor to hockey operations?

"Just keep an eye on everything," explains Scotty, who splits time during the regular season between Chicago and his home in Florida.

That's exactly what he has done.

'It makes you a complete person in this business that you can rely on him. Who else has that opportunity?'

-Dale Tallon, Blackhawks general manager



▶ While Tallon was debating the toughest decision the team had to make—firing coach Denis Savard after only four regular-season games—Scotty was there. During a slump in March, Scotty offered solutions. When Tallon was deciding what to do approaching the trading deadline, Scotty came up from Tampa to offer his insight. He joined the team on a daily basis in the playoffs, and when the Blackhawks dropped consecutive games in Calgary in the first round, Tallon turned to him for help.

"Just about how to handle stuff, how to handle the media, what to say and not to say. How to handle the league and the officiating," Tallon says. "They are things that are invaluable that you'll never forget. It makes you a complete person in this business—that you can rely on him. Who else has that opportunity?"

Delicago coach Joel Quenneville says
Bowman's most valuable advice for him has
come during the playoff run. Quenneville leans
on Bowman for suggestions on how to prepare
for games, how to handle days off—situations
Bowman has been through multiple times.

"Scotty has that winning perspective. He's seen it all, he's been through it all," Quenneville says. "He's got good instincts in a lot of situations."

➤ Even McDonough says he's constantly learning from Bowman: "He has become an instant mentor to me. I watch how he treats people and how he handles situations and the humility—he's incredibly humble."

But Tallon looks at Scotty and Stan and sees that the experience is more than about winning hockey games. Tallon's dad knew Scotty well, and Tallon has memories of Scotty donating old hockey equipment, enough to fill a station wagon, to his father in return for bringing junior players to Montreal for a look.

Tallon's dad died in November, and the entire Blackhawks team attended the funeral in Canada.

"I envy Stan now," Tallon says. "They have that ability to do that. I lost my dad, and I don't have that anymore."

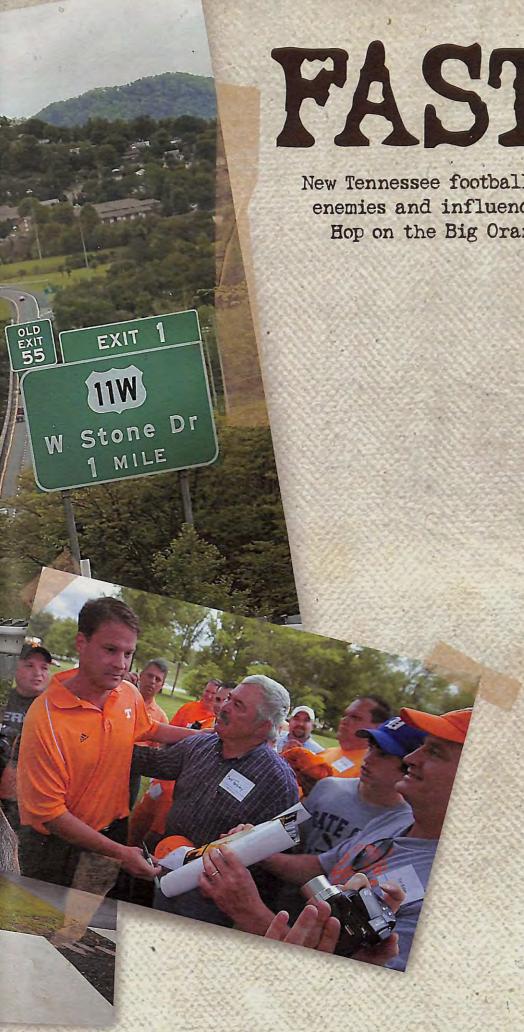
But he doesn't have to tell them to enjoy it. He sees two people who understand the need to live in the moment. Life's circumstances have taught them well

"To watch it," Tallon says, "is heartwarming." They're working toward a common cause: another Bowman Stanley Cup.

This time, their names would be etched side by side.

Tallon (left) had reason to be happy when he hired Bowman. The Blackhawks' G.M. was gaining access to one of the best minds in hockey.





FASTLANE

New Tennessee football coach LANE KIFFIN is winning enemies and influencing recruits at a breakneck pace. Hop on the Big Orange Caravan and enjoy the show.

By Matt Haves

Photos by Bob Leverone / SN

t just doesn't end. Every day another story, another anecdote. another reason to wonder how in the world something with so much potential so closely resembles the theatrics of professional wrestling.

With the same villains and heroes and unthinkable story lines.

On this day in May, hours removed from a rousing reception on the Big Orange Caravan tour of booster clubs, Lane Kiffin hears the latest. He is explaining depth charts and personnel, and right on cue, Tennessee assistant coach Eddie Gran calls with bad news: He has been kicked out of Pahokee High School in Florida by principal Ariel Alejo during an NCAAsanctioned recruiting period.

Alejo, you see, happens to be a Florida alum. Less than three months earlier, Nu'Keese Richardson, a star wideout from Pahokee, had a last-minute change of heart and signed with the Vols and brand-spanking new coach Kiffin-instead of the national champion Gators. Soon after, the firestorm that has become Insane Lane began-engulfing anyone and anything in its path.

The entire scenario from Day 1from the unseemly ousting of popular coach Phillip Fulmer to the latest in a growing line of stepping in it-begs for a do-over. And you know what? Kiffin, 34 years young and never before a college head coach-though he led the NFL's Raiders for 20 games before being fired last Septemberwould just as soon push the replay button on this WWE steel cage match, thank you.

"I wasn't hired to please other

programs," says Kiffin.

He's doing an All-American job of just the opposite.

The Big Orange Caravan used to be a way for Fulmer to play golf and thank the masses across a deeply loyal and obsessively passionate state. It's 432 miles from the east border in the Appalachians to the west border of the Mississippi River. And that distance can't touch the chasm of the unknown with Kiffin.

From Sevierville to Tullahoma, from Dyersburg to Cookeville and so many other small towns throughout the state, the new guy still is selling his plan at every stop. If Kiffin were one of their own, if he were Bob Neyland's kin or a Johnny Majors assistant or Fulmer's hand-picked successor, this would roll down easier than sweet tea in the summer.

But Tennessee isn't like every other school-and Kiffin certainly isn't like every other coach. There's a certain understated aura, a humble yet fiercely faithful Tennessee style that carries with it simple, staid values and principles. Much like General Neyland's Seven Maxims, which any self-respecting member of the Big Orange Nation knows by heart.

Maxim No. 1: The team that makes the fewest mistakes will win.

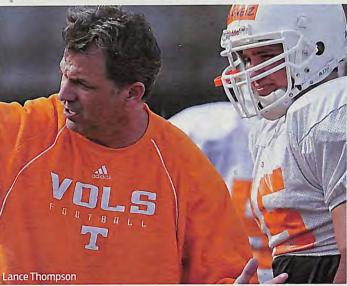
Since he was hired in December, Kiffin's outlandish personality, his take-no-prisoners recruiting persona and his-as some would say-mistakes have played out from wildly popular to uneasily embarrassing. With very few tweeners.

"They don't know what to think when they first see me," Kiffin says.

Some of Kiffin's all-starteam of top assistants-Reaves (South Carolina), Gran (Auburn) and Thompson (Alabama)—were poached from SEC rivals. Othersfather Monte Kiffin (Bucs) and Orgeron (Saints)-came from the NFL. All give Kiffin reason to brag when he's talking about the new direction of Tennessee football.











Or as Homer Marcum, a member of the UT Alumni Association Board of Governors, says during the caravan stop in Greeneville: "I've heard a lot about him. I wanted to come here and take his measure."

Two days after finishing this leg of the Big Orange Caravan, Kiffin was in the headlines again when he completed this year's recruiting class by signing offensive lineman Daniel Hood. Earlier in the week, when breaking down his current personnel, Kiffin pointed to the depth chart of his senior-laden, desperately thin offensive line and declared it "a mess."

Six years ago, Hood was found to be delinquent on the basis that he had committed the adult offenses of kidnapping and aggravated rape. He helped a 17-year-old friend assault Hood's cousin, with gory details (70 percent of the victim's body was covered in duct tape) that even the most hardened of minds couldn't imagine. Hood didn't participate in the act of rape, but he helped tape the victim and failed to intervene and stop the assault.

The 17-year-old was tried as an adult and given a 10-year sentence; Hood, then 13, was placed in the custody of the Department of Children's Services and eventually enrolled at Knoxville Catholic High, where he developed into an elite prospect. The victim in the case has written a letter on behalf of Hood, who became an exemplary student at Catholic High and had letters of support from the school's principal and assistant principal.

The signing of Hood, the Class 3A Mr. Football in Tennessee, marked yet another strange and surreal twist in this six-month carnival that gets more bizarre with each passing week.

"We didn't go about this lightly," Kiffin says of awarding Hood a scholarship.

Which falls right in line with everything else he has done since stepping on campus.

hen Tennessee was looking for a coach after forcing out Fulmer, athletic director Mike Hamilton wanted a young, dynamic personality who could battle Florida's Urban Meyer and Alabama's Nick Saban on the field-and, as important, off the field in

He wanted, more than anything, a football version of Tennessee basketball coach Bruce Pearl: a charismatic, high-energy guy whose recruiting classes are among the SEC's elite and whose teams have finished ahead of league heavyweight Kentucky four straight seasons-something never accomplished before by any team in the conference.

"When I arrived here, I told our fans I wanted to be the most hated coach in the SEC," Pearl says. "It took me one year. It took Lane one week."

He laughs, but the joke hits home perfectly. Kiffin has become a lightning rod for controversy since his initial press conference, when he declared he couldn't wait to sing

"Rocky Top" all night after beating the defending national champions in Gainesville this fall. That statement was harmless, a little something to fire up the masses.

But it didn't stop there. Among the highlights:

> Kiffin called out Meyer at a Memphis booster event in February, claiming Meyer committed an NCAA violation by contacting Pahokee's Richardson by phone during Richardson's recruiting visit to Tennessee. One problem: It wasn't a violation.

Florida officials complained, and SEC commissioner Mike Slive publicly reprimanded Kiffin. The fallout was felt all the way to Pahokee, a sleepy South Florida town famous for churning out Division I prospects. During another public booster event that day, Kiffin criticized Pahokee officials, saying he was concerned about Richardson's letter of intent reaching Knoxville because "someone (in Pahokee) was going to screw it up" with "all the things that go on in Pahokee."

Fast forward to earlier this month, and Alejo-with a little Gator hubris in his pocket-tossed out Gran and made it that much harder for the Vols to recruit Pahokee's four Division I prospects. Among that group are highly regarded wideouts Chris Dunkley and De'Joshua Johnson, who-hold onto your seats, everyone-also are being recruited heavily by Florida.

- > During the same booster event at which he accused Meyer of cheating, Kiffin took shots at other SEC rivals. He had hired Lance Thompson, Saban's top recruiter, away from Alabama and proclaimed Thompson was the reason for the Tide's back-to-back top-ranked recruiting classes (read: not Saban).
- He hired Gran, whom he said was "Auburn's best recruiter over the past 10 years," away from the Tigers and proclaimed that with Gran and Thompson, the Vols would own the state of Alabama in recruiting.
- > He taunted Georgia about falling asleep at recruiting, then landed three players from the state (even though two weren't offered by the Bulldogs).
- > He bragged about hiring David Reaves, Steve Spurrier's best recruiter at South Carolina.

Tennessee fans ate it up; his new peers did not.

'Those kinds of things," says one SEC coach, "come back to haunt you on fall Saturdays."

Meyer and Saban-Kiffin's two biggest targets this offseason-refused to comment for this story. All 12 SEC coaches are scheduled to attend the SEC spring meetings in Destin, Fla., in late May and will be sitting around the same table for the first time since Kiffin was hired.

"The first day I was here, Steve Spurrier called me out and accused me of recruiting without having passed the (NCAAmandated) test," Kiffin says. "I didn't call the



commissioner whining about it, I shot right back at him."

This, everyone, is the genesis of the brief and bombastic Kiffin era: Any publicity is good publicity.

When there are 10,000 empty seats in Neyland Stadium, when the home team is losing to Wyoming, when the Vol Navy is boating to the game to throw a few down instead of watching the Vols beat down an opponent, you've got to do something.

So Kiffin walked into the meat-grinder conference, found the biggest bully on the block and bloodied his nose right out of the box. Was it smart? Probably not—but smart sometimes takes a backseat when your roster is stocked with players who aren't making it happen.

"I have a ton of respect for the coaches in this league," Kiffin says. "But there's a purpose for everything we do here."

That purpose is players—more specifically, procuring players. When Kiffin arrived at USC with coach Pete Carroll in 2001, the Trojans were coming off a 5-7 season (2-6 in the Pac-10) and were treading in

mediocrity. Two years later, USC was thumping Iowa in the Orange Bowl and playing better than any team in the nation.

"When we got here, the thing I felt very strongly about was recruiting," Carroll says. "This is a players' game."

One of the first things Carroll did when he arrived in Los Angeles was retain assistant Ed Orgeron, a key recruiter for Miami a decade earlier. He also hired Kiffin, then a 26-year-old quality control coach for the NFL's Jaguars. Orgeron and Kiffin formed the foundation of a recruiting machine that has overwhelmed the game.

USC has multiple recruiting national titles, has played in seven straight BCS games and had 11 players selected in last month's NFL draft. Tennessee hasn't played in a BCS game since a loss to Nebraska in the 2000 Fiesta Bowl—it hasn't won one since beating Florida State for the 1998 national title—and had one player selected by the NFL this spring.

A few days after Kiffin was hired at Tennessee, he was on a plane to the Florida Gulf Coast to see an old friend about a job. Orgeron didn't really have a chance.

"This thing doesn't happen without Ed," Kiffin says.

t's all a little hectic these days for Monte Kiffin. It's not like he hasn't been here before, but this mile-a-minute slice of life still is growing on him. When it was clear the NFL's best assistant coach was leaving the Tampa Bay Buccaneers to join his son at Tennessee, there was little doubt he was all in.

That's Monte staying in the Holiday Inn Select for the past five months—the same guy who went back to work a day after he left the hospital following back surgery in April because he hadn't seen enough tape on Florida. It had been 35 years since Monte recruited as Tom Osborne's defensive coordinator at Nebraska, and there he was in January, pulling into the parking lot of a Memphis hotel to start recruiting with the guy who does it better than anyone else.

"Eddie said, 'I'll meet you downstairs at 5:30 a.m.,'" Monte Kiffin says. "We got to the school and it was pitch dark, there was no one in the building. We had to wait for the custodian to open the school."

They spent three hours at Melrose High School that day, and linebacker Greg King signed a month later.

They stopped in Lake Charles, La., where five-star cornerback Janzen



Jackson was a solid LSU commit. Hours later, they were in Atlanta, where four-star safety Darren Myles was choosing between the two in-state schools. Both eventually signed with Tennessee.

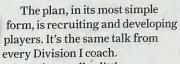
Less than four weeks later,
Tennessee had landed the
nation's No. 10-ranked recruiting
class despite the coaching
turnover and turmoil of the
previous two months. A week
later—and just days after Kiffin
accused Meyer of an NCAA
violation—Tennessee issued
letters of admonishment to
Kiffin and Orgeron for a
pair of NCAA secondary
recruiting violations (a fake
press conference, use of a
fog machine).

One day after that,
Kiffin was talking about a potential
recruit on a Knoxville radio show and used the recruit's
name—another NCAA violation. The recruit in question,
tailback Bryce Brown, was the nation's consensus
No. 1 high school player. He still was being recruited by
a number of schools, including fast-charging and late-tothe-party Tennessee.

And here's where it all turns, where all the zaniness and nuttiness and the this-can't-be-true theatrical script come into clear focus. Not only did the Vols sign Brown, who never considered Tennessee until Kiffin arrived, they signed three of the four top 100 players who waited until after national signing day to make a decision.

In other words, the more time the Tennessee staff had with players, the more players were sold on what is happening in Knoxville.

"I never bought into all the hype," Brown says. "That stuff was never an issue. I was sold on the coaches and their plan."



Some just walk a little differently.

t's steamy hot in
Kingsport, a solid
two-hour bus ride from
Knoxville, and Lane Kiffin is
desperate for a shower. The last stop
this day on the Big Orange Caravan is
the most important.

The farther from Knoxville, the greater the unknown about this outsider who has turned a stoic Southern program sideways, who still hasn't spoken with the well-respected Fulmer and admits he's still working on learning those Maxims. He strolls through the manicured lawn of the Allandale Mansion, and it isn't until he's right on top of the 300 or so in attendance before they realize

... it's him!

And he's engulfed in a moshpit of Orange shirts and ballpoint pens.

A day later and fresh from the excitement of the caravan, the call comes from Gran in South Florida. The absolute worst part, Kiffin says, is he won't be able to watch tape of the players Gran was recruiting.

Because this is an NCAA dead period for head coaches contacting players, Kiffin sent his assistant coaches on the road with video camcorders. They tape practice and drills, then burn DVDs and FedEx copies for next day delivery.

It's not an NCAA violation but a scenario the governing body could easily find problematic once it becomes aware. Great, get in line.

"I guess if they're talking about you," Kiffin says, "you must be doing something right."

That, and putting on one helluva show.





#### Quarterback is 'not an issue' for Kiffin-yet

It's an easy assumption to make, really.

Lane Kiffin's coaching philosophy is based on
the quarterback and the passing game.

So how could he begin his first season at Tennessee with holdover QBs who struggled so mightily last year—and not sign at least one quarterback in February?

"I'm not going to sign a quarterback just to have a quarterback," Kiffin says. "We want the best high school players in the nation here."

It's no surprise then, that Sporting News'
No. 1 pro-style quarterback recruit for 2010
has Tennessee among his final five choices.
And in case you're wondering, Kiffin's unique
style hasn't worn thin with Jake Heaps of
Sammamish, Wash.

"Players are glad to see a coach who's willing to get in the ring with them," says Heaps, who also is considering Washington, BYU, LSU and California. "It's one thing if a coaching staff tells you to go in there and do this for me. It's another thing if the staff is

willing to go out there and do it, too."

There will be plenty of hands-on work with Tennessee's quarterbacks this fall. Senior Jonathan Crompton is the projected starter, although he looked utterly lost at times last season. Kiffin won't say it, but there's a reason a player who had so much potential earlier in his career under quarterbacks guru David Cutcliffe couldn't go through simple progressions last fall without Cutcliffe.

Sophomore B.J. Coleman left the team after the spring season, leaving just Crompton and junior Nick Stephens as the only scholarship quarterbacks on the roster. Former Miami quarterback Robert Marve is considering transferring to Tennessee and could compete for the starting job in 2010.

"We can win with either of our quarterbacks," Kiffin says. "That will not be an issue."

- Matt Hayes

#### Brash works if you win

Sporting News asked three legendary SEC coaches about their impressions of Lane Kiffin's first months at Tennessee



Pat Dye, Auburn,
1981-92: "I don't know
Lane, and I don't know
the problems they have at
Tennessee. I don't know
the details and how much
is accurate. But I know one

thing for sure: You can't be mild and meek in this conference because they'll eat you alive. It was a little different with us. If we had a problem with another coach, we'd pick up the phone and call them and have it out. Maybe he had to do something to shake things up there in Knoxville. I think he's done that. But I can tell you this: He ain't going to run Urban Meyer or Nick Saban or Steve Spurrier or Mark Richt out of town. They've been around a long time, and I'm quite sure they've seen it all."



> Vince Dooley, Georgia, 1964-88: "He certainly hasn't been conventional, that's for sure. He has made an impact. He's gotten a lot of people's attention. Everything still

goes back to that basic thing—whatever your style is—in that it all will be interpreted by the bottom line. Are you winning? If he does well, then those that support him will say that's the way to take charge. He certainly has been different than anybody I can remember. You gotta be yourself, so maybe that's himself. When he sees (other SEC coaches), they'll be polite. Coaches tend to be that way initially. There will be outward civility, and then inward—for those who have been directly affected by his remarks—there will be those competitively grinding a little bit. At least (Steve) Spurrier would wait until after he'd won a game to make a few remarks."



> Johnny Majors, Tennessee, 1977-92: "It's quite evident he and his staff know something about recruiting. That's a great starting point. They're not shy and

are extremely aggressive. Secondly, after watching four or five practices, I feel like they know what they're doing. There's a tremendous amount of energy and enthusiasm. I told the staff, that's the way a football practice ought to look. I can't tell you why he says what he does and what his reasons are. But he's very confident and very aggressive and willing to put his toe on the line."

- Matt Haves



# COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Locker will have to prove he can run a pro-style offense.

#### **Fix-it Focus: Washington**

Sarkisian is supervising a complete overhaul

**By Dave Curtis** 

dcurtis@sportingnews.com

Through the first 25 years of the Pac-10, no program in the league boasted a better overall winning percentage than Washington. But since the end of the 2002 season, the Huskies are 18-53, including a 14-game losing streak that dates to November 2007. Perhaps no BCS team is in greater disarray than Washington, which began the Steve Sarkisian era this winter.

#### > HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

Huskies lovalists point to the hiring of coach Rick Neuheisel in January 1999 as the genesis of the program's slide. Although Washington won with Neuheisel, it moved away from the power football emblematic of championship teams of Don James (1975-92) and began to play a more open style. Instead of pounding opponents during coldweather home games late in seasons, Washington tried to throw and became less effective as the season wore on.

Keith Gilbertson didn't improve the situation as Neuheisel's replacement, but Tyrone Willingham gets the rest of the blame, "He was just sleepwalking through his four years," former Huskies quarterback Hugh Millen says of Willingham.

Willingham and his staff failed in recruiting and player development, and those problems were glaring during last season's 0-12 nadir. The Huskies lacked effective linemen on both sides of the ball and didn't have adequate skill players around quarterback Jake Locker, who was lost to a season-ending thumb injury in the fourth game.

#### > HOW BAD WAS IT?

Washington's 14-game losing streak is the longest in Division I-A, by four games over skids at SMU and Iowa State. Last season, the Huskies ranked 100th or worse among 119 I-A teams in 16 of the 17 primary statistical categories measured by the NCAA. Washington lost by 10 or more

points nine times, including five times by 34 or more.

"Last year," Locker says, "isn't one of my favorite things to talk about."

#### > A TWO-POINT PLAN

1. Revamp the offense. Sarkisian brings a pro-style offense-one that will balance the run and pass-from USC, where he was a coordinator. Locker, who is more familiar with the spread, liked the change during the spring. "We're starting brand new with everything and really working on the little things," he says. "It's been fun working with the new staff."

Sarkisian says he's confident Locker can make the throws required in the system and believes Washington's line, which allowed 31 sacks last season, can keep Locker off the turf. The starting linemen dropped more than 200 pounds combined during winter conditioning, which should make them a quicker bunch.

"We're starting to shape this team in the way we wanted it to be shaped," Sarkisian says, with literal and figurative implications.

2. Improve the defense. With the exception of second team All-Pac-10 defensive end Daniel Te'o-Nesheim, the talent on defense is thin. The unit finished last in the Pac-10 in yards allowed and sacks last season.

Its biggest asset might be new coordinator Nick Holt, who held the same position at USC. "Emotion is a defense's best friend, and Nick can bring these guys some energy," Millen says. "And he'll make the right tactical adjustments, too."

#### **Ex-Trojan All-Americans** are now all over America

USC, long a collector of high school All-Americans, is now supplying other BCS programs with talent. A slew of former Trojans, led by these four, is set for breakout 2009 seasons as transfers at other schools:



EMMANUEL MOODY, RB, Florida, He played well in the second half of last season, and now this strong speedster knows every nook of the Gators' scheme. "He's still putting the finishing touches to that process, especially in the pass game and protections," running backs coach Kenny Carter says. "We're pleased at how he's going about his business." If the Gators run some pro-style sets, as expected, Moody is likely to be the featured back.

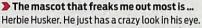
VIDAL HAZELTON, WR, Cincinnati. If the NCAA grants him eligibility for 2009, Hazelton, a former top 10 national recruit, will make the Big East's best offense even more potent.

JAMERE HOLLAND, WR, Oregon. After earning a start in the Holiday Bowl to cap last season, Holland maintained his momentum and was Oregon's best offensive player this spring. He has the speed to thrive as a deep threat.

JOSH TATUM, LB. Missouri. A minor back injury interrupted spring drills for Tatum, who spent last year at a junior college. He could fill a starting spot outside or back up Luke Lambert in the middle.

- Dave Curtis

#### **Getting to Know ... Texas WR JORDAN SHIPLEY**



Three things that show I'm country are ... I have four or five fishing poles in the passenger seat of my truck right now. If you looked on my iPod. you'd see over half of my music is country. And if

I ever get time off, the first thing I do is plan a fishing trip or a hunting trip.

> The best hunting trip I've ever been on ended with ... An 11-point buck.

> Vince Young gave me the nickname ESPN because ... When I came in during the summertime I was making some plays he said would have been on SportsCenter, so that's how that got started.

> When depicting football in Texas,

the TV show Friday Night Lights is ... Funny and overdramatized.

> The best football lesson my dad ever taught me is ... When you're going up to catch the ball, you're going to get hit, so you may as well catch the

> The classes I'm taking this semester are ... Grad school classes—foundations of epidemiology, exercise and mental health and an independent study in kinesiology.

> The most emotional football has ever made me is ... Both extremes, with the lowest being Texas Tech last year and the highest being any of the wins against Oklahoma, especially last year with the Cotton Bowl expanded.

My favorite Longhorn when I was a kid was ...

Major Applewhite. He just always seemed to know

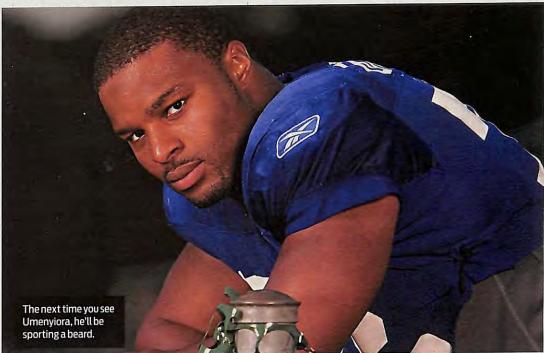
Something people would be surprised to know about me is ... I'm learning to play the

My favorite off-campus Austin hangout is ... Any barbecue restaurant.

> The most impressive thing I've ever seen Colt McCoy do is ... Against Iowa State two years ago, I was blocking for him and I quit blocking because there were about six guys around him. The next thing I knew, I looked up and he had somehow slipped out and threw a TD to Nate Jones. I got chewed out in the meeting room, but I thought he was down about five seconds before he threw the ball.

- Jeff D'Alessio

#### Umenyiora: 'I want to look like the animal that I am—I'm hungry'



For Giants defensive end Osi Umenyiora, priority No. 1 this offseason is recovering from a torn meniscus in his left knee that required surgery and forced him to miss the 2008 season. At 27 and entering his prime, Umenyiora tells Sporting News he feels better than ever.

First of all, rehab was rough. For a little while, my knee was locked at a certain angle. I couldn't move it for a couple of days. But it feels great now. The meniscus actually was torn the year before, but it finally went completely in '08. The knee hurt the year we won the Super Bowl-that whole year, I was having a problem with that knee. If you watch how I went down last preseason, I wasn't hit. I didn't turn awkwardly. I just went down. It was time.

After the surgery, I couldn't do anything for six weeks. I had to be on crutches for six weeks, and the muscles around my knee virtually disappeared. All I could do was straight-leg raises and range-ofmotion stuff. It was really painful, especially when I tried to bend it. My knee was swollen to the size of a grapefruit for the first month. It's very scary. After a month of doing the same thing, you barely see any improvement. You can't foresee that, in a couple of months, things will be much better. It seems like it might go on forever.

I didn't watch many of our games—just couldn't sit through them. The whole season, I might have watched five games. I'd look to see if we won or not. On a Sunday, I'd just chill. I'd actually watch other teams, watch defensive ends. I learned a lot from watching other defensive ends.

I learned there aren't many good defensive ends in the NFL. There might be only a few really, really good ones. I won't tell you who I don't like. I do like Atlanta's John Abraham. I like the two in Indianapolis, Dwight Freeney and Robert Mathis. I also like Minnesota's Jared Allen.

A defensive end who is blocked one-on-one is supposed to dominate. You're not supposed to be blocked by one guy. If the offensive line is sliding toward you, or chipping you, I can understand. But if you're just sitting over there with an offensive tackle, one-on-one, you're supposed to whip him-period. I didn't see a lot of that. I was seeing guys get shut down one-on-one.

I'm ready to play right now. I've been game-ready since April. Before that, I could've gone out and played, but I wouldn't have been myself. I could've played in the playoffs last year, but I would've had to take 1,000 pain pills, 1,000 anti-inflammatory injections. It would've been stupid for me to do that.

I'm going to come back stronger and bigger. My speed is where it used to be. I've been testing it against guys, and they see it, too. I'm growing a beard this year. I want to look like the animal that I am. I'm hungry.

A lot of people have the type of injury I have toward the end of their career, and they're done. For me, it happened in the middle of my career. That's better. If you play 12 or 13 years, you're almost guaranteed to have one season-ending injury. I got mine out of the way. I just ask God that it doesn't happen again.

- As told to Clifton Brown

#### Get well soon: 10 more on the mend

Osi Umenyiora's return feels like a big-ticket acquisition to the Giants. Ten other players who should provide a similar boost, with games played/started in '08 in parentheses:



TOM BRADY, QB, PATRIOTS (1/1): New England averaged 1.4 fewer yards per pass attempt, took 27 more sacks and scored 179 fewer points in 2008 than in '07. Expect the

tempo to change from swift to breakneck with Brady.



KELLY GREGG, NT, RAVENS (0/0): Gregg started 93 games from 2002-07, and if his knee is healed new defensive coordinator Greg Mattison can move around matchup

nightmare Haloti Ngata. Another '07 starter, safety Dawan Landry (neck), also returns for Baltimore.



MATT HASSELBECK, QB, SEAHAWKS (7/7): After ranking in the top 10 five times from 2002-07, Seattle plummeted to 28th in total yards last year. Adding

T.J. Houshmandzadeh will help, but a declining, injuryprone line must improve for Hasselbeck to have a chance.



MARLIN JACKSON, CB, COLTS (7/7): The Colts' secondary got better late last year, and the development of Tim Jennings and Melvin Bullitt (subbing for Bob Sanders)

adds depth with Jackson and Sanders returning.



FELIX JONES, RB, COWBOYS (6/0): Losing his breakaway ability-he averaged 8.9 yards per carry—hurt more than most

realize. Coaches plan to use him in a

multitude of roles, saying he is the perfect complement to Marion Barber and Tashard Choice.



PATRICK KERNEY, DE, SEAHAWKS (7/7): Seattle got after the passer (35 sacks) last year but ranked 32nd in pass defense. Think Kerney (191/2 sacks in 23

games with Seattle) might help?



RASHARD MENDENHALL, RB, STEELERS (4/1): Mendenhall was underwhelming before fracturing his left shoulder but also took time to mature as a

collegian. Pittsburgh's 23rd-ranked running game, which averaged 3.7 yards a carry, could use Mendenhall's size inside and open-field ability.



SHAWNE MERRIMAN, OLB, CHARGERS (1/1): San Diego racked up 149 sacks in Merriman's first three years. The Chargers had only 28 sacks and the NFL's

second-worst pass defense in '08. It's simple: Merriman makes his teammates better.



CARSON PALMER, QB, BENGALS (4/4): The high-flying Bengals of Palmer's youth are gone. Cincinnati stumbled around with the 30th-ranked passing attack last year.

With Houshmandzadeh and other standbys gone, hopes rest upon Palmer.



AARON SCHOBEL, DE, BILLS (5/5): Schobel is no star, but the Bills had just 14 sacks in his 11-game absence. He makes the offense pay attention and should create

opportunities for teammates like rookie DE Aaron Maybin.

Zack Greinke has emerged as the Royals' ace, but he isn't the only reason for Kansas City's success. Three offseason pickups—first baseman Mike Jacobs, infielder/outfielder Willie Bloomquist and center fielder Coco Crisp—also have made big contributions.

Mike Jacobs. The Royals traded for Jacobs because they needed power. His 32 homers for the Marlins last season were 12 more than anyone hit for Kansas City. But this young club, beaten down by losing, also lacked personality. Enter Jacobs. Exit quiet. "It took a couple of days to see if this guy was serious or just an act," catcher John Buck says. "Then it was like, no that's him. He's the ultimate confident loudmouth. He's just fun to be around."

Willie Bloomquist. He left his hometown Mariners for the chance at regular playing time in Kansas City. Bloomquist hasn't won an everyday job but has proved invaluable in a utility role that includes work at five positions. He's hitting .338 with a .418 on-base percentage. "Every time he plays, he's done something to help us win, whether it's steal a base, make a play, get a clutch hit, get a bunt down," general manager Dayton Moore says.



Jacobs has brought power and personality to a Royals team that desperately needed both.

Coco Crisp. Crisp has improved the Royals in three ways: His stellar defense allows last year's center fielder, David DeJesus, to play in left field; he has the know-how of a World Series winner; and, most important, he gives the team a true leadoff hitter. Crisp ranks among the A.L. leaders in pitches per plate appearance and walks, and he leads the Royals in stolen bases. "We've talked about on-base percentage in the past but haven't had much results," says third baseman Mark Teahen. "It starts with Coco. Every time up, he gets the pitcher to throw quite a few pitches. Everybody feeds off that."

- Stan McNeal

### BASEBALL

#### Scouts' Views:

Surging and slumping players

➤ What's behind Red Sox righthander Josh Beckett's struggles?

**A.L. scout:** "I think (being suspended for throwing over Bobby Abreu's head after time had been called) is really bothering him. He really needs to pitch inside, move guys off the plate."

**N.L. scout:** "I just wonder if he's a better guy getting about 25 starts with time off during the season, rather than going all the way."

#### > How good can Orioles center fielder Adam Jones be?

**A.L. scout:** "You could see him start to figure it out last year. He reminds me of a Mike Cameron with more power."

N.L. scout: "If I had to pick one player who's going to make the biggest jump from Year1 to Year2, it's him. I'd like to see him be more selective at the plate, but you can say that about a lot of young guys."

#### > Can the Mets fix lefthander Oliver Perez?

**A.L. scout:** "He's the biggest tease in baseball. You see it once every five starts. That's what gets managers fired."

**N.L. scout:** "I saw him at the WBC, and he didn't look right there. It had nothing to do with the knee that they say is hurting. His arm angle was way down. It really looked to me like something was wrong with his arm."

- Gerry Fraley



#### THE ROTATION

#### Gimme 5



White Sox DH Jim Thome hit his 500th career home run in 2007, is 14th on the all-time list and ranks third among active players behind

Mariners DH Ken Griffey and Yankees third baseman Alex Rodriguez. Thome analyzes his five favorite sluggers-four of whom hit lefthanded, like Thome-in today's game:

Ryan Howard, 1B, Phillies. I played with Ryan, and you can see that Charlie Manuel has taught him some of the same things he taught me, such as pointing the bat upward before settling into his stance. That's a timing mechanism. I always knew Ryan was going to be very special.

Adam Dunn, OF/1B, Nationals. You have to admire his consistency. Over the past four or five years, he's been very impressive (at least 40 homers in each season since 2004).



This season, Dunn has added some average to go with his power.

Ken Griffey, DH, Mariners Griffey always was a guy on the other team that you would watch and go, "Wow." Then I had a chance to play with him, and I actually was more impressed with the person he is than the player. You know, that's a pretty good statement because he's a Hall of Famer as a player.

Ryan Braun, LF, Brewers. He's not as big as these other guys, but I like his technique.

Chase Utley, 2B, Phillies. A Chase Utley, 28, Printies. A second baseman with power. You have to like that. Another guy I played on the same team with in Philadelphia who works as hard as anyone.

- As told to Stan McNeal

#### Pain or no pain, Utley plays like a champ

By Stan McNeal

smcneal@sportingnews.com

For Chase Utley, perhaps the only thing more agonizing than playing with an injury is talking about playing with an injury.

Last season, the All-Star second baseman helped the Phillies win the World Series despite a painful right hip that required offseason surgery. At the height of a late-July slump-even after the Phillies acknowledged he was hurting-Utley smiled and said he was fine. Now, he admits to playing much of 2008 at considerably less than 100 percent. Though doctors told him he might not return until June, he was in the opening day lineup. And Utley has been as productive as ever, on pace for yet another 30-homer, 100-RBI season.

SN got three views of Utley's injury from the defending champs.

> Utley: "There was a point in the (2008) season-in the second or third month-when I started to feel it, and it got worse for about a month. In the second half, it staved the same. It wasn't great, but playable. Going into surgery, I knew there was going to be a long recovery period. But four to six months is a pretty broad range, so, really, I was unsure how everything would go. Through the winter, I tried to make progressions every day but without doing too much. The training staff put a good



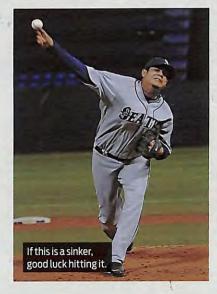
Utley healed fast and played in the Phillies' first 23 games before taking a game off.

program together that allowed me to push it but not overdo it. By the end of January, I started feeling pretty good. I got to spring training early, tested it and it responded well. By the beginning of spring training, I was pretty optimistic I'd be able to go opening day. It feels good now, but it can get better. Over the course of the season, I hope it will."

> Phillies general manager Ruben Amaro Jr.: "I knew in November he'd be ready for opening day. When he sets his mind to doing something,

don't bet against him."

> Phillies outfielder Shane Victorino: "I'm his teammate, and I didn't know how bad he was hurting. When he had surgery, I was sitting at home in Hawaii and saw it come across the (TV) clicker that Utley was going to be out for four to six months. I was shocked. To have him back halfway through spring training was absolutely amazing, but I can't say I'm surprised. He has unbelievable pain tolerance. OK, he has hip surgery and doesn't run, doesn't touch a bat for two to three months. Then he comes on like this. It just shows you how good he is."



#### The crown finally fits Seattle's Hernandez

Mariners righthander Felix Hernandez was an 18-year-old phenom who hadn't yet pitched in the majors when he was dubbed King Felix. "He was named the king before his time," first-year manager Don Wakamatsu says. Five years later, Hernandez still is trying to live up to the hype. Based on the early returns, there are three reasons this could be the season he permanently ascends to the throne:

1. THE SINKER. Hernandez has an upper-90s fastball and his curveball is considered his second-best pitch, but he has been relying on a low-90s sinker more often this season. "When you have four plus pitches, sometimes you can get carried away with one of them," Mariners pitching coach Rick Adair says. "He's been using his sinker more." Adds Mariners catcher

Kenji Johjima: "He's getting better command on his sinker, which has very heavy sink."

2. BETTER CONDITIONING. Hernandez says he weighs about 210 pounds, down from 240 a couple of years ago. "He's worked hard," Wakamatsu says. "Earlier in his career, he was a little heavier. Now he's in good shape."

3. MATURITY. Married and the father of two, Hernandez has come a long way since he was a pudgy kid with wild hair and a quick temper. "Maturity off the field makes you a better player on the field," Wakamatsu says. "He's grown up," says Royals catcher Miguel Olivo, who caught Hernandez in the minors, "In Triple-A, he wears his hat on the side, he gets angry a lot. Now he's a big league pitcher."

Stan McNeal

Once again, the Twins are allowing the fewest walks in the American League—a stat they have owned for more than a decade. Their formula is simple.

#### STRIKE 1: Look beyond the radar gun.

Harder throwers than righthander Kevin Slowey, Minnesota's poster boy for control, were available in the second round of the 2005 draft, but none was better at hitting spots. "The Yankees can give seven trillion to CC (Sabathia), but we have to figure out another way to get good pitching," says Mike Radcliff, the Twins' vice president of player personnel. "We've tried to develop a few things to assess talent, and one is incorporating more emphasis on command and control than others."

STRIKE 2: Practice what you preach. Before Rick Knapp jumped ship to become the Tigers' pitching coach this season, he spent 12 years as the Twins' minor league pitching guru. When top prospects reported to the Arizona Fall League, Knapp limited them to throwing only fastballs and changeups for three weeks, according to Radcliff. Knapp had specific instructions when pitchers reported for spring training, too. Instead of working on locating pitches, he told his guys to throw right down the middle. "Movement takes care of itself," Knapp says. "Only place I want to see the (catcher's) glove move is down. That means you're making good pitches."

**STRIKE 3: Preach what you practice.**"Walks don't make them happy," says

#### No free passes

From 1997-08, Twins pitchers allowed the fewest walks (5,202) in the major leagues and finished in the top five in that category each season. The next-stinglest team, the Diamondbacks, allowed 476 more walks than Minnesota in that span.

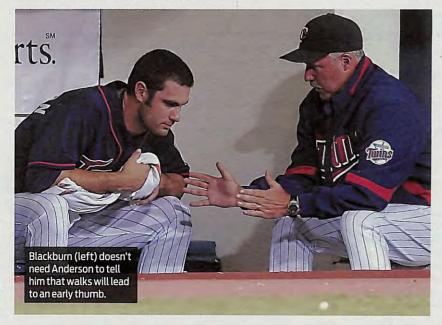
Year	BB	Rank
1997	495	2nd
1998	457	1st
1999	487	3rd
2000	516	5th
2001	445	3rd
2002	439	4th
2003	402	2nd
2004	431	2nd
2005	348	1st
2006	356	1st
2007	420	2nd
2008	406	1st

Twins righthander Nick Blackburn.

"You'll get a pretty early thumb if
you stand out there and throw balls."

Throwing too many strikes can increase
a hitter's comfort level, but the Twins
don't mind the ball being put in play. "I
had a start earlier (this season) when I
got four ground balls in a row, but they
went for hits and a couple of runs," says
Blackburn, who was visited by pitching
coach Rick Anderson. "Andy' was like,
'You're throwing a lot of strikes, and
that's your job. Sometimes they're going
to find holes.'"

- Stan McNeal



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### NASCAR

#### **Running at Indy** is 'something special'



Mears is familiar with the Brickvard, both as a child of Indy cars and a driver of stock cars.

The first Indy 500 was in 1911. The first Brickvard 400 was in 1994, but it has grown into arguably the third-biggest race in the country. "Even for the die-hard stock car guys, that's a very important race," says driver Casey Mears.

Rick Mears, Casey's uncle, won the Indy 500 four times, and Casey set the track Cup qualifying record in 2004. With the 93rd Indianapolis 500 set for May 24 (the Brickyard 400 is July 26), Mears talks about the track and the two types of racing it hosts:

On the track's allure: "There is a special feeling when you go to Indy. Even people who haven't been to races before and go to Indy sense it. It's the history. It's been around for so long. You get a feel for it as soon as you walk in the gates there. You get a feeling you're part of something special when you get to that racetrack."

#### On the differences between the cars:

"In an IndyCar, I've run wide-open around there. It's a totally different sensation than being in a stock car. In a stock car, you're on the brakes-hard. It's probably one of the harder braking zones that you'll have all season long."

On winning the pole for the 2004 NASCAR race: "I shut off the engine and was coasting in; I could hear the crowd. For a Mears to come back and get the pole-after my uncle won so many there-it was just a crazy feeling, an awesome experience. I've never been able to hear the crowd inside the racecar. That was the first (and only) time."

- Matt Crossman

#### How I'd fix Talladega

The spring Sprint Cup race at Talladega featured a spectacular last-lap crash that sent Carl Edwards' Ford flying into the catch fence and injured seven fans. SN asked three drivers how to make conditions at the restrictor-plate track safer for drivers and fans.



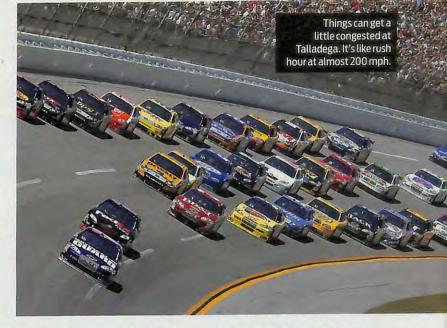
**▶** Brad Keselowski: "They should just build bigger fences, and we'll just drive them (the cars)-

because we're driving the safest racecar there ever has been or ever will be, and if we can continue to put shows on like that, we're going to get those (TV) ratings back up and get those fans back in the stands, and that's what we need to do. I think you have to start with making the fans happy, then build everything else around it. Even if I wouldn't have won it, I would have still said Talladega was a heck of a race-I'll watch it."



➤ Carl Edwards: "The bottom line is, unless you take the banking out of that racetrack-or we don't

go race there—you've got this big problem trying to keep the cars apart, keep them slow, and that's the battle. There's history there, and



the fans enjoy that, but there's also the real problem of having a group of cars run like that. It's something they've worked on for a long time with restrictor plates, and they've worked on the safety stuff, but there are still things to be done."



> Jeff Gordon: "When we were finalizing this car at Talladega at the last test we went to several years ago, I

always felt like the wicker (the leading edge of the rear wing) was a little bit too big for the size of the restrictor plate. I'd like to see them consider not just restrictor plates but possibly something with that wicker, too-not push so much air over the tops of these cars. ... The cars, they're easy to pass, so you could probably take a little bit out and still put on a heck of a race."

- Reid Spencer

#### ... with Jamie McMurray

My first car was ... A 1987 Ford Ranger, and I would say the thing that was special about it was that it was

> My dream car is ... I am just now getting into cars. I've never really been into hot rods or fast cars or anything like that. So I don't have one.

> The best cruising music is ... I just like to hit "seek" every 45 seconds. I never listen to a song all the way through.

- > When I get a flat, I ... Fix it myself. Absolutely.
- My average freeway cruising speed is ... 80.
- > The Sprint Cup driver who'd be the most maniacal on the road is ... Robby Gordon.
- A car is incomplete without ... Air in the tires.
- > I got my last speeding ticket for going ... 60 in a 45, three years ago. I didn't have a ticket for like 10 years, and then I got three tickets within three months-all within 5 miles of each other. I lived in Statesville (N.C.), and there was a two-lane road

I'd take to my house. I knew there were cops on it. I wasn't speeding because I was in a hurry. I just wasn't paying attention.

- > My driver's license photo is ... Old. > Hybrids are ... The wave of the
- > On a scale of 1 to 10, my highway road rage rating is ... 9. When people ride in the fast lane, if there's somebody behind you that's faster, I think you should just get out of the
- way. I get pretty upset about that. ! wouldn't be caught dead in ... A Volkswagen bus.

- Reid Spencer

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#### Three-wide

Three drivers—Denny Hamlin, Sam Hornish and Kyle Buschanswer three questions

SN: Which driver who has never made the Chase has the best chance of making the cut this year: David Reutimann, Brian Vickers or Juan Pablo Montoya?

HAMLIN: It's kind of a toss-up. But I'd say Vickers is one of your more consistent guys. Montoya has great speed, Reutimann has great speed, but I think Vickers does a really good job on all the racetracks-short tracks and big tracks.

HORNISH: I'd say Reutimann, and the reason I'd say that is he seems like he's continually getting stronger and stronger.

BUSCH: Reutimann was strong in the beginning of the year. I like his chances. I like Montoya's chances, with (crew chief) Brian Pattie. I think they're a smart bunch. Brian (Vickers) is good, too, because he's got Toyota on his side, and Ryan Pemberton seems to be a good crew chief. They're all lacking a little bit, but they still could have a good battle.



Denny Hamlin



Sam Hornish



Kyle Busch

SN: Have you ever asked anyone else in the garage for an autograph?

HAMLIN: I did before I got here (to Sprint Cup racing), but once I got here, it's been to help my foundation or a charity. That would be the only time that I do.

HORNISH: We've asked a lot of people for autographs for the charity bowling tournament we do every year. As far as myself, I think I'm going to wait until I'm a retired driver and go around and make all these guys give me their autographs.

BUSCH: I think it was 2006, actually, that I had a Jeff Gordon T-shirt from back in '94, when I was starting to watch racing. It was still brand new. I never even wore the thing. I had Jeff sign it, and I've got

it framed up in my office.

SN: Have you taken any precautions against contracting the swine flu?

HAMLIN: No. From what I've seen and heard, it's been pretty isolated, so I haven't altered my life in any kind of way.

HORNISH: I had the flu really bad right when the swine flu stuff came out. I'm pretty sure it wasn't the swine flu, but I got my flu out of the way for a little while. We're just trying not to go to Mexico or anywhere out of the States right

BUSCH: I don't know what the hell you're talking about. Whatever that is, I haven't done anything. I don't know what it is.

-Reid Spencer

#### Who's due for a victory lane debut?

In his fifth Sprint Cup start, Brad Keselowski was the unlikely winner in last month's Aaron's 499 at Talladega Superspeedway. Until then, the Cup Series hadn't had a first-time winner since Clint Bowyer took the checkered flag at New Hampshire in September 2007. Sporting News identifies the three drivers most likely to be the next first-time winner:

> Joey Logano. There's no denying the steady progress this rookie is making during his first full season in Joe Gibbs Racing equipment-and with crew chief Greg Zipadelli on the pit box. Logano, who will turn 19 this month, scored his first top 10 at Talladega and backed that up by qualifying fifth and finishing ninth two weeks later at Darlington, where he led 19 laps.



Logano has two wins in the Nationwide Series and seems ready to break through in Sprint Cup.

> David Ragan. After just missing the Chase for the NASCAR Sprint Cup in 2008, Ragan has been disappointing this year. Since finishing sixth in the season-opening Daytona 500, he failed to finish on the lead lap in the next seven races. But Ragan has speed in his Roush Fenway Ford, and a breakthrough in the July plate race at Daytona wouldn't be a huge surprise.

David Reutimann. Consecutive finishes of 26th at Talladega, 28th at Richmond and 29th at Darlington slowed the Reutimann express, but the driver who jokingly calls himself "The Franchise" at Michael Waltrip Racing has shown the ability to run with the elite Cup drivers. The MWR equipment is vastly improved this year, and as long as Reutimann stays confident, he can expect to win a race sooner rather than later.

- Reid Spencer

#### Throwing cautions to the wind at Dover

Chances are the 79th Sprint Cup race at Dover won't be much like the third Cup race at the track. Back on June 6, 1971, there wasn't a single caution at the Mason-Dixon 500, the last time that has happened at Dover. Winner Bobby Allison was the only driver to finish on the lead lap, and only 19 of 40 cars were running at the finish.

Sporting News asked four drivers from that 1971 race whether another caution-free race could happen at the Monster Mile.

Bobby Allison: It was really incredible. That was the only time it ever happened there. It was an awful tough day, but that was part of the deal back then. The track was really hard on all of the competitors-you ran hard, and it wore you out. Most everybody else got relief drivers, but I went all day, and I managed to last.

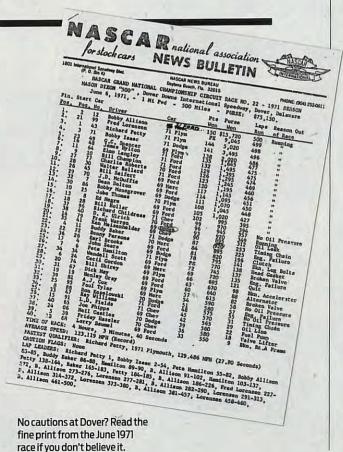
Fred Lorenzen (second place, one lap down): No, I don't think so. But Dover was a great racetrack,

one of my favorites. I remember that race. It was a long day, but you didn't feel it when you were in the car.

Richard Petty (third place, two laps down): It gets more unlikely as time goes by. Now, NASCAR is so safety-conscious that if they see something blowing around on the racetrack, they'll throw a caution to keep somebody from running over it. Man, we used to dodge bumpers and cars running up the racetrack the wrong way and cars spinning out. As long as they didn't get in the groove, they just kept on. running. It's a two-way street. It also keeps the race closer.

Richard Childress (18th, 106 laps down): Somewhere along the line it can, but I don't think it will happen at Dover. I've run in a few caution-free races, but 500 miles at that place—that's when it was 500 miles (it's 400 now)—that was a long, long day.

-Reid Spencer



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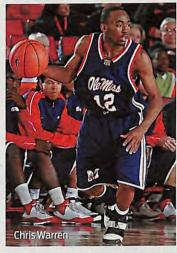
CASEBACK VIEW



## OLLEGE BASKETBALL

#### There's more in store for these four

Coaches recruit in the offseason. Players practice and train. What do fans do? For those whose teams were disappointing or struggled in 2008-09, they hope for better. These teams should deliver:



MISSISSIPPI. The Rebels led Division I in one unofficial statistic: season-ending injuries. Trevor Gaskins, Eniel Polynice and Chris Warren missed a combined 81 games. So coach Andy Kennedy is optimistic about the prospects for improvement. The team fought to a decent 16-15 record, and others' injuries allowed freshman Terrico White to flourish. He averaged 20.8 points in the final dozen games.

"I was incredibly proud they continued to battle and allowed us to walk out with our dignity," Kennedy says. "It could have just gotten disastrous."

TEXAS. The Longhorns (23-12) needed better point guard play and a harder edge to their backcourt-opponents made 43 more 3-pointers. The addition of heralded recruit Avery Bradley should improve the perimeter defense, and the deep frontcourt will continue to make progress.

IOWA STATE. Star forward Craig Brackins' decision to pass on the NBA draft was essential for the Cyclones (15-17). Coach Greg McDermott's sophisticated system is most effective when operated by a veteran team, and he'll finally have one in Ames.

GEORGETOWN. The best thing about freshman center Greg Monroe is he's soon to be a sophomore. The second-best thing is he's Greg Monroe. Add in guard Chris Wright and wing Austin Freeman, and there's enough talent among the Hoyas (16-15) that some might predict another Big East title.

- Mike DeCourcy

#### A head coach at 31? If anyone can do it, it's an old hand like Memphis' Pastner

**By Mike DeCourcy** 

decourcy@sportingnews.com

Josh Pastner was not like the other players at the 1995 Nike All-American Camp. He wore the same uniform, competed in the same games. When everyone else finished playing, though, they'd leave the RCA Dome to get a snack or grab some sleep. Pastner remained until all the action was done.

It was impossible not to notice the scrawny teenager who was more absorbed in the camp games than the scores of Division I coaches assembled to scout the next generation of college stars.

"I would stay in the gym all day long and watch kids," Pastner says. "That was just me. I loved being in the gym. I loved learning.

"I wanted to be a Division I head coach. (Back at the Nike camp), who would have ever thought I'd become the head coach at Memphis?"

The obvious answer: Pastner. Maybe not Memphis in particular, but he knew he'd coach at this level-and soon. He is 31, only a dozen years removed from wheedling his way onto the cover of SN as an Arizona walk-on celebrating the Wildcats' 1997 NCAA title. But he has worked toward this since he was a kid.

He coached his own AAU team, the Houston Hoops, about the time most kids were getting a learner's permit. His dad ran the program, but Josh did the coaching, scouting and, often, recruiting. Current NBA players Stephen Jackson, Emeka Okafor and T.J. Ford played for the team.

"Because of my job, I couldn't travel as much as the team wanted, so Josh would coach, run practices, line up the hotels," Hal Pastner says. "He had the respect of every player. He'd present scouting reports in the hotel conference room."

At Arizona, Josh advanced from walk-on to undergraduate assistant to video coordinator to assistant coach to lead recruiter. He was so consumed by work he slept on a leaky air mattress and most often had nothing in the fridge but milk

and nothing in the pantry but cereal and peanut butter.

He built a reputation that led John Calipari to hire him at Memphis in 2008. When Calipari left for Kentucky in March, Pastner was so ready to join him he had turned in his courtesy car and was packing boxes in his office when athletic director R.C. Johnson called and asked Pastner to visit his house. Like that, Pastner's lifelong plan had come to fruition.

It's a big job, though. Memphis has passionate fans and high expectations following four consecutive 30-win seasons. The Tigers lost three of

Pastner's fresh face is the new face of Memphis basketball.

their top four scorers, and most key recruits bailed when Calipari exited. Pastner tried to talk star point guard Eric Bledsoe into signing with the Tigers, but he had spent months selling Bledsoe on Calipari. It was almost inevitable Bledsoe would choose Kentucky.

"Josh has been thrown into a tough situation because of that past success," Calipari says. "The people of Memphis have got to understand, this is not normal.

"I think he's going to do great. The city loves him. The powers that be are behind him. You know he can recruit. He's got to find his way and his niche."

Pastner won't have any problem finding the gym, though. It has always been his home.



#### Polish that resume: Three jobs that could open in '10

It can be tricky predicting where coaching changes might occur in college basketball. Not many expected Kentucky would go through another search two years after the last. These are a few places, though, where the coaching carousel might stop next spring:

> Connecticut. Jim Calhoun demonstrated how much he wants to coach by coming back for next season,

even though he knows he'll have to battle allegations of NCAA violations. So maybe he'll have another few years in him after this one. But the retirement talk sure sizzled in March. "Jim has the same passion and focus as in the past-and frankly more than ever before," UConn athletic director Jeff Hathaway says.

> St. John's. This will be an important season for Norm Roberts. The university has been patient

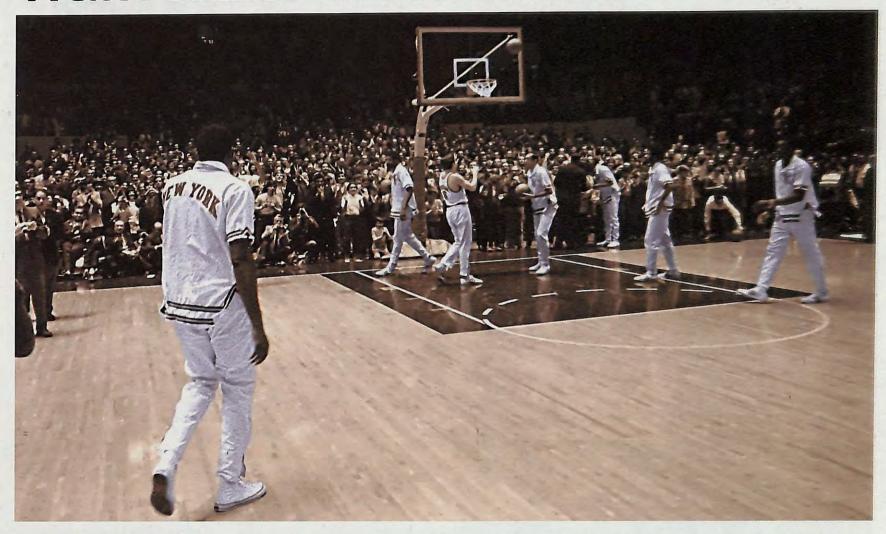
as his teams have improved without the results reflecting it. With the Big East taking a step back and his team full of veterans, progress should be more obvious now.

N.C. State. Sidney Lowe's roster now consists primarily of players recruited by him. It's not clear that's good. The Wolfpack have failed to reach 20 wins in consecutive seasons for the first time since 1998-99.

- Mike DeCourcy

## I Remember ...

## Walt Frazier Hall of Famer, seven-time NBA All-Star





Frazier, now 64, was 25 when his teammate Willis Reed (top) inspired the Knicks by joining them during pregame warmups against the Lakers.

Reed photo by George Kalinsky FRAZIER: FRANK FRANKLIN II / AP

here has been no more memorable game in Knicks history than their Game 7 victory over the Lakers in the 1970 NBA Finals. And there has been no more dramatic moment than Knicks captain Willis Reed limping onto the court midway through pregame warmups.

Despite being hobbled by the torn muscle in his right thigh that forced him to miss Game 6, he scored the first two baskets of Game 7 before returning to the bench for the second half of an eventual 113-99 Knicks victory. Teammate Walt Frazier, who had 36 points and 19 assists in the win, delights in retelling the behind-the-scenes story.

This guy could barely walk. We knew he was in a lot of pain. What I didn't know until a couple years ago was that he had been over at The Garden at 9 o'clock that morning with trainer Danny Whelan trying to get ready to play that night. I'll never forget Bill Bradley telling him, "Willis, if you can just give us a few minutes, that's better than anyone else that we have."

A lot of people thought it was premeditated, the way he came on the court. But when we were in the locker room, everyone kept going in the training room where Willis was. And Coach (Red) Holzman said, "Hey, get out of here. Whether Willis plays tonight or not, we have to play

the game." At that point they closed the door to the training room. So when we came on the court, we had no idea whether Willis would play or not.

And you know what happened? When he came out on the court, we were just as flabbergasted as everybody else. Then I saw Jerry West, I saw Wilt Chamberlain, I saw Elgin Baylor, three of the greatest players ever, just mesmerized. They just stopped doing what they were doing to look at Willis. At that point, I said to myself, "We've got these guys." It gave me so much confidence to see those guys so enthralled with Willis and what he was doing.

As told to Bill Eichenberger

## Girardi can't dodge the tough questionsthere are too darn many of them

here may be a more thankless job in sports these days than managing the Yankees, but few come to mind.

Every day he puts on his uniform, Joe Girardi knows he'll walk through the clubhouse, down the runway and into the dugout so he can seat himself amidst a phalanx of waiting cameras, tape recorders and notebooks.

If he's lucky, there won't be any questions about the latest accusations surrounding his superstar third baseman.

But even on a good day, the other questions won't go away: the ones about the first baseman with the \$180 million contract who was hitting .190 after 100 at-bats or the ones about the two new pitchers who cost the franchise about \$243 million.

"It's 100 at-bats," Girardi said about first baseman Mark Teixeira. "All hitters go through tough periods. But because he signed with the Yankees and it's at the start of the season, everyone notices.

"You know, A.J. (Burnett) hasn't thrown badly except for the one game in Boston," Girardi continued. "Other than that one game, he's been OK."

For \$82.5 million, most people expect better than OK, better than a 5.36 ERA six weeks in.

At least on this morning, Girardi didn't have to talk about CC Sabathia, the team's \$161 million addition. He had pitched a shutout two nights earlier, getting his ERA under 4.00 for the first time this season.

That was the same night Alex Rodriguez returned to the lineup. The Yankees were in the midst of a fivegame skid-their first of that length in Girardi's two seasons-and had dropped to 13-15. Rodriguez, for once, could not have had better timing.

Of course, his return officially put the word zoo back in the Bronx Zoo. If Rodriguez-who homered on the first pitch he saw-ends up hitting half as many home runs as he has issued "I was young and stupid" apologies, he's a lock to be MVP, even after missing 28 games following hip surgery.

His admission at the start of spring training that he used steroids, followed by the May publication of

Selena Roberts' book alleging he also used them before and after his three seasons with the Rangers, has done the impossible-made A-Rod the center of more tabloid headlines than in the past. As great a player as he has been, as image-conscious as he is, A-Rod can't get out of bed without finding trouble. He is the jock equivalent of

By John Feinstein

the old Peanuts character Pig-Pen, who walked around in a constant swirl of dirt and dust. His nondenial denials-the strategy upon his return was to refuse to discuss anything about Roberts' book-has put his manager and teammates in a tough spot. They can't proclaim his innocence because they have no idea whether he's telling the truth. They aren't going to rip him because they have to share a clubhouse with him and need him.

Girardi, a smart, well-educated man, was reduced to somehow questioning the timing of the book's release. Was there a good time-from the Yankees' point of view-to release a book with revelations like this?

The only possible answer to all the A-Rod noise is to win. Then, no one will really care what he did in the past.

The problem with that is the Yankees' core is getting old and a lot of their best players-young and old-are getting hurt. Chien-Ming Wang hasn't won a game in almost a year and was back on the D.L. in April after his ERA rose above 34.00. Both catchers, Jorge Posada and Jose Molina, went on the D.L. in the same week. Right fielder Xavier Nady could be out until mid-Iune.

Worse than that, though, is the toll of Father Time. Mariano Rivera is 39 and gave up back-to-back home runs in the same game for the first time. Derek Jeter is still elite, but with his 35th birthday approaching, he's lost range and maybe even a little bat speed.

Girardi knows all this, but he also knows no one wants to hear whining from the manager of a team with a payroll north of \$200 million. He knew what he was getting into two winters ago when he agreed to succeed



Acclaimed author John Feinstein is a regular contributor to Sporting News. Feinstein's 24th book-Are You Kidding Me? The Story of Rocco Mediate's Extraordinary Battle with Tiger Woods at the U.S. Open-is now available at bookstores and Amazon.com.

the popular Joe Torre, owner of four World Series rings.

What Torre did best was never let anyone see him sweat. He went through the daily dugout rituals in good times and bad without ever losing his sense of humor or his sense of calm. In 2007, when the Yankees got off to an awful start and rumors were flying that he was about to be fired, Torre was asked during a pregame dugout session if there was any panic in the clubhouse. "Absolutely," he said. "That's what we do around here all the time-panic."

Girardi is not one to panic, either, but he's already missed one postseason and finds himself looking up in the standings at Toronto and Boston. He has reason to feel confident that Teixeira will hit when the weather warms and that Sabathia and Burnett will pitch better than OK. But he knows Rivera, Jeter and the 37-yearold Posada won't get younger and the A-Rod questions won't go away.

As Girardi sat and talked on that perfect May morning, Rodriguez walked from the dugout to join his teammates in pregame stretching. On cue, dozens of fans began screaming his name, hoping he might stop for an autograph.

Rodriguez kept moving. His manager kept talking. The subject at that moment was players using pink bats on Mother's Day. For once, Girardi found himself answering a question that put a smile on his face.

If only for a moment.



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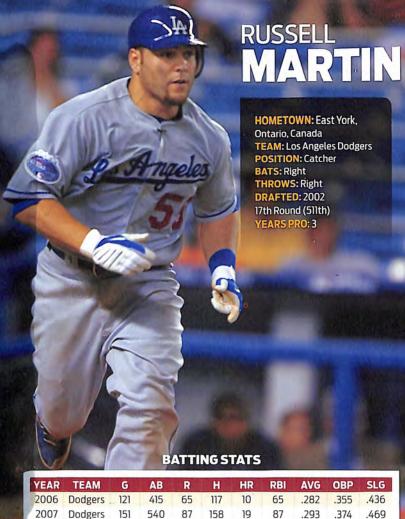


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430

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239

13

42

.280

.285

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221

.385

.373

.396

.433



HOMETOWN: Weir, Mississippi TEAM: Houston Astros POSITION: Starting Pitcher BATS: Right THROWS: Right DRAFTED: 1996 23rd Round (684th) YEARS PRO: 8

#### PITCHING STATS

YEAR	TEAM	G	W	L	ERA	IP	SO
2001	Astros	28	14	3	2.73	141.2	144
2002	Astros	35	19	9	3.01	233	208
2003	Astros	21	10	5	2.97	127.1	108
2004	Astros	36	20	10	3.49	237	206
2005	Astros	35	20	12	2.94	241.2	184
2006	Astros	33	15	8	2.98	220.2	166
2007	Astros	33	14	7	3.18	212	154
2008	Astros	32	17	10	3.54	208.2	165
CAREER:	8 YEARS	253	129	64	3.13	1,622	1,335

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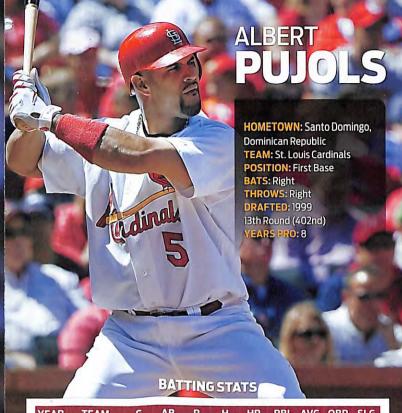
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YEAR	TEAM	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	AVG	OBP	SLG
2003	Padres	3	8	2	2	1	2	.250	.400	.750
2003	Pirates	27	79	13	23	3	12	.291	.423	.506
2004	Pirates	120	411	61	116	26	82	.282	.358	.550
2005	Pirates	162	599	110	183	32	101	.306	.402	.559
2006	Pirates	159	570	101	163	35	109	.286	.396	.532
2007	Pirates	145	538	78	133	21	84	.247	.327	.418
2008	Pirates	106	393	72	111	22	64	.282	.375	.519
2008	Red Sox	49	184	39	54	9	37	.293	.370	.527
CAREE	R:6 YEARS	771	2,782	476	785	149	491	.282	.375	.516



26										
YEAR	TEAM	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	AVG	OBP	SLG
2001	Cardinals	- 161	590	112	194	37	130	.329	.403	.610
2002	Cardinals	157	590	118	185	34	127	.314	.394	.561
2003	Cardinals	157	591	137	212	43	124	.359	.439	.667
2004	Cardinals	154	592	133	196	46	123	.331	.415	.657
2005	Cardinals	161	591	129	195	41	117	.330	.430	.609
2006	Cardinals	143	535	119	177	49	137	.331	.431	.671
2007	Cardinals	158	565	99	185	32	103	.327	.429	.568
2008	Cardinals	148	524	100	187	37	116	.357	.462	.653
CAREE	R: 8 YEARS	1,239	4,578	947	1,531	319	977	.334	.425	.624



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